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HOGG'S LIFE OF SHELLEY

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THE LIFE
OF
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

By
THOMAS JEFFERSON HOGG

With an Introduction by
PROFESSOR EDWARD DOWDEN

AND AN INDEX



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INTRODUCTION

OF the several writers who have told in whole or in part the story of Shelley's life, five possessed the great advantage of having known him face to face. Personal intimacy with the subject of a biography does not always ensure accuracy of statement ; it does not even ensure that a figure will be given us, so to speak, in the round. Perhaps we shall get only a sketch taken from a single point of view, and that a point of view from which the features are not seen in their most characteristic aspect. Still the portrait is not made up ; it is not pieced together ; it starts from a direct impression, vivid or vague according to the artist's faculty of perception, and around this impression the less significant details group themselves and cohere. The value of such a portrait does not necessarily lie in its completeness ; if it is true and animated up to a certain point, true as far as it goes, it is of enduring value as a contribution to the whole. But it is important to understand the precise angle from which the sketch was made, and, if possible, to make allowance for the personal qualities contributed by the artist's mind and hand. For the eye sees only what it has the power of seeing ; the same sitter posed before a Holbein and a Velasquez would be, in portraiture, two different persons, and yet one and the same. And again, each of us includes many persons in one, and at different periods of life this person or that within us

may for the time be dominant. Thus in the various portraits of Wordsworth, now the north-country dalesman seems to have the upper hand or to have come to the front, and at another time, or with another artist, it is the poet or the brooding and impassioned thinker ; and yet both likenesses are valuable, both likenesses are genuine.

Mary Shelley, the poet's widow, was in large measure qualified by intimate knowledge, deep sympathy and power of intellectual perception, to have represented his character and his life with fidelity. But perhaps she was too near to see him quite aright ; and she saw him through her tears. She thought anxiously of a biography, but during the earlier years of her widowhood, to publish it would have been impossible. Her first duty was to her son, and Percy's grandfather, Sir Timothy Shelley, on whose goodwill the boy's welfare in great part depended, could not tolerate the thought of directing public attention to the story of the poet's life. She wrote no biography of Shelley, but the Prefaces and Notes which she added to the poems in her collected editions are invaluable memoranda, telling much of the circumstances and the changing moods of mind that throw light upon the origin and development of both the larger works and the groups of shorter pieces in their annual chronological succession. They are written with great ardour, held to some extent in control by a studied temperance, for she felt the resistance of public opinion, and sought to confront it with at least an appearance of fair-minded discretion. But as she drew towards the close of her task, and the memories of the last days in Italy crowded upon her mind and heart, it grew inexpressibly painful. 'I began with energy', she wrote, 'and a burning desire to impart to the world, in worthy language,

the sense I have of the virtues and genius of the beloved and the lost ; my strength has failed under the task'. There can be no doubt, however, that the testimony borne by Mary Shelley contributed not a little to lighten the cloud of ignorant prejudice which had gathered about her husband's memory. Some of his acts, many of his opinions, might still be condemned ; but it became evident that before condemnation they should be understood.

The earliest life of Shelley on any considerable scale was that by Thomas Medwin, which was published in 1847. Medwin was Shelley's cousin on the mother's side ; he was Shelley's schoolfellow at Sion House ; during school vacations the cousins were often together ; when apart, they maintained, for a time, a regular correspondence : ' More than all ', writes Medwin, ' I passed the two last winters and springs of his existence, one under his roof, and the other with him, without the interruption of a single day '. For some years, however, during the middle period of Shelley's life, Medwin, an officer in the 24th Dragoon Guards, was in India, and lost sight of his cousin, until in 1821 the old intimacy was renewed at Pisa. As early as 1833 a sketch of Shelley's life by Medwin had appeared in his little volume of *Shelley Papers* ; nearly everything of value in this brief memoir is embodied in the later *Life*. No one, except Mary Shelley, had advantages equal to those of Medwin in his capacity as biographer, and an acquaintance with Shelley from his childhood was possessed by himself alone. The result of his labours was in no way commensurate with his advantages. His *Life of Shelley* is well-meant ; he writes with an affectionate regard for Shelley, and with a vague sense that he was a person of extraordinary genius. But Medwin was deficient in the power of quick, intuitive

perception ; he was deficient in vigour of intellect ; his touch was feeble and uncertain ; he did not distinguish between what is vital or characteristic and what is accidental or trivial. He falters languidly through his two volumes, and somehow comes to an end ; but what is interesting—and the volumes contain not a little that is interesting—has to be delivered and rescued by the reader from the book. Add to this that he was a most inaccurate writer, and that in many matters he did not take the pains to inform himself aright. A student of Shelley cannot but be grateful to Medwin for putting on record his reminiscences of the poet, but the thanks which he offers must needs be qualified by many reserves, and he must constantly be on his guard against Medwin's unintentional errors in the statement of real or supposed facts.

The other three witnesses who testify with a personal knowledge of Shelley—Peacock, Trelawny, Hogg—were men of exceptional ability. The contribution of Peacock, however, to the biography of Shelley is slight. It consists of two articles published in *Fraser's Magazine* (June, 1858, and January, 1860), with a 'Supplementary Notice' (March, 1862), and a group of 'Unpublished Letters' of Shelley (March, 1860). These will be found reprinted in the third volume of *The Works of Thomas Love Peacock* (1875). The writer's acquaintance with Shelley probably began in the spring or summer of the year 1812 ; it probably made no considerable advance until the autumn of the following year. 'Peacock's way of thinking'—so I have elsewhere written—'was one of easy liberality. His conversation sparkled with keen, ironic wit ; he told a good story, and brought out its point with vivacity. He viewed all things from a certain mundane point of view, mocking the follies, affectations and extravagances

around him ; yet he never became a mere man of the world. Something of the poet was curiously allied in him to the laughing philosopher. He was well read in Greek and Latin authors, had some knowledge of ancient art, and had seen something of life and of society'. He is described by Shelley in a letter to Hogg as 'a very mild, agreeable man, and a good scholar. His enthusiasm is not very ardent, nor his views very comprehensive ; but he is neither superstitious, ill-tempered, dogmatical, or proud'. The acquaintance continued until the departure of Shelley and Mary for Italy, and from Italy some of the most delightful of Shelley's letters were addressed to Peacock.

When the earliest in date of his articles in *Fraser* was written Peacock was seventy-three years of age. With advancing years he had grown more genial in temper ; but it cannot be said that his *Memoirs of Shelley* err by excess of warmth. He sets down his facts clearly and with decision ; he sometimes gives his wit its play ; he justly eulogises Shelley's 'great genius, extensive acquirements, cordial friendship, disinterested devotion to the well-being of the few with whom he lived in domestic intercourse, and ardent endeavours by private charity and public advocacy to ameliorate the condition of the many who pass their days in unremunerating toil'. These words are just, and generous as well as just ; but in the main, as was natural with an old man telling of one who was young and enthusiastic, he writes with a sense of aloofness from Shelley, and, as was natural, with a sense of superior knowledge of life. That Peacock's memory sometimes misled him in serious matters was shown by the most intimate and devoted of Shelley students, Richard Garnett, in a paper printed towards the close of his *Relics of Shelley* (1862). At the same time Peacock's *Memoirs*

of Shelley contains much that is interesting and important, and, neither wasting many words nor indulging in much emotion or sentiment, he contrived, within narrow limits, to convey a large body of information, if not to make Shelley exactly live and move before us.

Live and move before us Shelley does in Trelawny's *Recollections of Shelley and Byron* (1858) and in the enlarged edition of the same book, which appeared with the title *Records*, instead of *Recollections*, twenty years later. Trelawny, like Peacock, was an old man when his first edition appeared, but he had contemplated the publication of such a book since comparatively early days, and he had carried the spirit of youth into these elder years. His eyes—the eyes of memory and imagination—were not dimmed by lapse of time; he still saw Shelley as vividly as he had seen him at Pisa and at Casa Magni in 1822; he remembered the tones of his voice; he recalled the chase of light and shadow across Shelley's mind, like that which flies across the sea. It is true that we cannot accept as literal transcripts all his records of Shelley's conversation; but as ideal transcripts, representing Shelley's opinions, feelings, manner of speech, they are incomparably excellent. He was not, what Peacock was described as being in 1814, 'a cold scholar'; he had an ardent love of literature—such literature as made an appeal to his own mind; but he had been more a man of action than a student, and by action his feelings and imagination had been quickened. Towards Mary Shelley, especially in the second form of his book, he is unjust. Shelley had been removed from the world of change, and he stood before Trelawny as he was in the last year of his life. Mary Shelley lived on, and estrangement had crept in between her and her former friend and admirer. The fancies created by that es-

trangement mingled with his recollections of her ; but the lost Shelley was unchanged and unchangeable by time ; he was saved for Trelawny's imagination by the very fact that he had been lost. And the Shelley whom he had known was Shelley at the most interesting period, Shelley in the full power of his manhood and his genius. And again he saw Shelley made more impressive, more vivid, by the contrast with Byron. The conditions were singularly favourable for the production at least of a swift and characteristic piece of etching ; and Trelawny forfeited none of his advantages ; he selected the essential lines with a sure hand ; his needle was bold yet delicate ; and his acid bit the plate in a way which gives an impression not only of truth of line but truth of colour. Unhappily Trelawny's acquaintance with Shelley was only an acquaintance of six months. But perhaps the unity of his impression would have been less perfect had the acquaintance extended over years, with the alterations and shiftings of years.

Trelawny in his great old age read for the first time Hogg's *Life of Shelley*. He recognized in the portraiture of Hogg the veritable Shelley, in years when the poet was still immature, whom he had himself known in the full powers of adult manhood. It is a most happy circumstance that for Shelley's early years we should have such a witness as Hogg, for Shelley's last days such a witness as Trelawny. Hogg, the municipal corporation commissioner, and afterwards the revising barrister for Northumberland and Berwick, had little in common with Trelawny, wild adventurer in privateering expeditions in company with the 'De Ruyter' of his romantic autobiography—*The Adventures of a Younger Son*—wild adventurer in Greece, who received all but his death-wound from the assassin hard by the moun-

tain cavern of Odysseus. But each was a man of keen perceptions and of original character, and each was deeply interested in Shelley. Hogg's *Life of Shelley* was made up of two portions, written at two periods of the biographer's life, two periods separated by a wide interval. The record of Shelley's life at Oxford was published in *The New Monthly Magazine*, then under the editorship of Bulwer, in the year 1832. The first and second volume of *The Life of Shelley* in which the earlier reminiscences were incorporated, was published twenty-six years later. In 1858 Hogg was sixty-six years old. His vivacity, however, had in no degree flagged; it may err by excess; it may not always be happily directed; but it is constant and abounding. In that vivacity there is a singular and piquant admixture of youthful enthusiasm, revived by the recollections of youth, and the nods and becks and wreathed smiles of a man of the world, enjoying ironically the follies and enthusiasms of days long past. The Oxford papers were at once recognized as admirable of their kind, and perhaps they gained more than they lost—though Hogg himself thought otherwise—through the editorial restraints imposed by Bulwer. Mary Shelley, in her Note on 'Queen Mab' speaks of these papers as having been written by a man of great talent, a fellow-collegian and warm friend of Shelley; 'they describe admirably', she adds, 'the state of his mind during his collegiate life'. Nothing, indeed, can be more animated, nothing more sympathetic than Hogg's account of Shelley at Oxford. We have only to allow for some errors in detail, and to take into account the writer's point of view.

In my *Life of Shelley* I endeavoured to indicate Hogg's attitude towards Shelley, and I cannot do better here than reproduce a page written more than twenty

years ago : ' Thomas Jefferson Hogg, son of a gentleman of old family and high Tory politics, residing at Stockton-on-Tees, had entered University College in the early part of the year 1810, a short time before Shelley . . . There was little resemblance between the friends. Hogg had intellectual powers of no common order, and all through his life was an ardent lover of literature ; but he cared little or nothing for doctrines and abstract principles such as formed the very food on which the revolutionary intellect of Shelley fed ; and his interest in literature was that of a man of the world, who finds in poetry a refuge from the tedium of common life. For the foibles and follies and false enthusiasms of individuals or coteries Hogg had a keen eye and a mocking tongue ; yet he tolerated all novelties of opinion or of practice as bright oases in the desert of common sense. Above all things he hated a dullard and a bore. For his own part he was well pleased to enjoy the world, to accept things as they are, to toil in the appointed ways for the allotted rewards, to take life pleasantly and have his laugh and his jest at the human comedy ; and thus he was protected by a fine non-conducting web of intellectuality and of worldliness from all those influences which startle and waylay the soul of the poet, the lover, the saint, and the hero. But his perception was clear that it is they, and they alone, who make life something better than a dull round of commonplace from which one might at any moment sink to apathy or disgust. In Shelley there stood real and living before him ' the divine poet '—all that he himself could never be, and could not even choose to be. For ' the divine poet ' Hogg's admiration was genuine and vivid ; but with his admiration for the poet there mingled a man of the world's sense of superiority to the immortal child. Accordingly Shelley appeared to Hogg at once sublime

and ridiculous, a being fashioned to serve as an inexhaustible source of delight and diversion to men of sense and wit. Sailors, says a French poet, sometimes beguile the tedium of their voyage by putting a captured albatross through his paces on the deck ; the great white wings of the bird of sea and sky droop piteously by his side and impede his movements, while he struggles amidst the jeering crew. As skillless and comical as the albatross did Shelley appear in Hogg's eyes, when he had deserted his region of upper air for this substantial earth of ours. In reality Shelley possessed an excellent business faculty when his imagination and emotions did not disturb his understanding, and when he cared to fix his attention on practical details ; but this fact did not attract the notice of Hogg. In his view Shelley was either ' the divine poet ' or ' the poor fellow '—most charming and most grotesque of human innocents or oddities ; and the peculiar piquancy of Hogg's account of his relations with Shelley lies in this—that in Hogg the lover of the ideal was at the same time a man of the world, and the man of the world was a lover of the ideal, so that underlying his admiration we can always discover a kind of amused disdain, and again under his disdain a certain involuntary loyalty and admiration.' ¹

It must, however, be added that in his youth Hogg was less a man of the world and more of an enthusiastic and romantic person than he might have been willing to allow in later years. He wrote, or attempted to write, poetry. He generously came forward in defence of his friend when the University College authorities summoned before them the unfledged philosopher of *The Necessity of Atheism*, and with his friend he suffered the punishment of expulsion for contumacy

¹ *Life of Shelley*, vol. i. pp. 57, 58.

in refusing to answer certain questions put to them. Before he was twenty-one Hogg had written a novel—the *Memoirs of Prince Alexy Haimatoff*—in which he tried hard to be romantic and semi-revolutionary, though with imperfect success. To the reader of the ‘translation’ of Prince Alexy’s *Memoirs* by ‘John Brown, Esq.’, it might seem as if young Hogg, like the young Scythrop of ‘Nightmare Abbey’, slept with horrid mysteries under his pillow, and dreamed of venerable Eleutherarchs, and ghostly confederates holding midnight conversation in subterranean caves. The book received the honour—its sole distinction—of an extravagantly eulogistic notice by Shelley in *The Critical Review*, December, 1814, the authorship of which it fell to my lot to ascertain.

After the death of Mary Shelley, her son and her daughter-in-law, Sir Percy and Lady Shelley, placed in the hands of Hogg the documents in their possession with a view to his producing a Life of Shelley which should be authentic and authoritative. When in 1858 the first two volumes of the designed four appeared, great was their surprise. ‘We saw the book for the first time’, wrote Lady Shelley in her Preface to *Shelley Memorials* (1859), ‘when it was given to the world. It was impossible to imagine beforehand that from such materials a book could have been produced which has astonished and shocked those who have the greatest right to form an opinion on the character of Shelley; and it was with the most painful feelings of dismay that we perused what we could only look upon as a fantastic caricature, going forth to the world with my apparent sanction—for it was dedicated to myself’. Lady Shelley adds that feelings of duty to the memory of Shelley left his representatives no other alternative than to withdraw the materials which had

been entrusted to Hogg, and which, they could not but consider, had been strangely misused. Thus the *Life of Shelley*, here reprinted, remains a fragment. 'That the conclusion exists in manuscript', writes Mr. W. M. Rossetti, 'has been affirmed to me as a known fact; also that it does *not* exist'. On this matter I am able to add nothing to Mr. Rossetti's statement. Any continuation of Hogg's *Life of Shelley* would have been of the highest interest up to March, 1818, the date of Shelley's final departure from England. For the period of Shelley's residence in Italy its value could not be great.

It is impossible to commend Hogg as a biographer for discretion, good taste, or good workmanship. His resolve to be witty at any cost, to be droll or whimsical; his ever-obtruding egoism, his way of rambling into a thousand irrelevancies and trivialities, would lead us to name his book a salmagundi; we can hardly name it a biography. But in the salmagundi are many delightful morsels, reminding a reader of the dish described in *Roderick Random*, in which with salt beef from the brine were mingled onions and pepper, 'brought into a consistence with oil and vinegar'. Nor is the portrait of Shelley a mere 'caricature'. We must first bear in mind Hogg's point of view. And, secondly, we must remember that the interval between Shelley's expulsion from Oxford and his flight from England in company with Mary Godwin—to which point Hogg's narrative does not quite reach—was little more than three years. In some respects Shelley may perhaps be called a precocious boy; he was precocious in his energy in action—action which was often unwise; precocious in his resolution in applying to practice certain hastily caught up opinions. But his various powers were not quickly matured, nor

were they quickly organised and harmonised. Not until after the period with which Hogg's narrative closes was his intellect or his imagination really adult. It was the immature, crude, unorganised Shelley whom Hogg saw, and whom by bits and scraps he painted ; it was Shelley in his state of early fermentation, with the frothy and flocculent yeast rising to the surface ; not the Shelley of ' Julian and Maddalo ', or of ' The Triumph of Life '. Having due regard to these considerations, and allowing for the fact that Hogg's enjoyment of the ludicrous aspect of things carries him away and tempts him to fantastic exaggeration, and a certain disproportion in his choice of incident, we may discover lines of truth in the portrait which he has drawn.

There were, however, grave derelictions of a biographer's duty in Hogg's performance of his task. ' The worst flaw of all ', says Mr. Rossetti, ' is that letters of Shelley given in Hogg's *Life* are garbled and misdated '. The garbling was not confined to letters of Shelley. Thus in the letter of C. H. Grove which brings the *Life* to a close a few lines as printed run thus : ' And not long after, for it was very soon after the Lent term had commenced, a little controversial work was published at Oxford. The pamphlet had not the author's name, but it was suspected in the University who was the author ; and the young friends were dismissed from Oxford, for contumaciously ', etc. The actual words of the letter are these : ' And not long after, for it was very soon after the Lent term had commenced, Bysshe and Mr. Hogg published their little work entitled *The Necessity of Atheism*. They did not publish the pamphlet with their names, but it was well understood in the University that they were the authors, and they were expelled the University

for contumaciously', etc. The passage might have been omitted, and nothing would have been lost ; to rewrite the passage was to violate editorial fidelity.

Not only this : in certain instances where facts were inconvenient Hogg does not—as might be legitimate—leave the facts untold ; he perverts the facts, and adapts his account of Shelley's conduct to accord with the perversion. Soon after his first marriage Shelley left his young wife for a short time at York under the care of her sister, while he hastened to the south to seek an interview with his father. On his return to York he was convinced by Harriet that Hogg had made dishonourable advances towards her during his absence. He questioned Hogg, and, unless Shelley was romancing, his former friend acknowledged the offence. An alienation—after pleadings and remonstrance—naturally followed ; Shelley, with his wife and sister-in-law, quitted York for Keswick ; and after a short time correspondence between the friends ceased.

It could hardly be expected that Hogg should tell this story, but he need not have constructed a narrative that is misleading ; he need not have printed portions of Shelley's letters with an introduction of disguising comment ; he need not—as it cannot be doubted that he did—transform a letter of remonstrance from Shelley into a ' Fragment of a Novel ' with ' Charlotte ' for the heroine, assigning the Fragment a place in his biography where its true significance could not readily be guessed.

Hogg's offences as a biographer are grave ; it was not unjust nor indiscreet that the materials for continuing his *Life of Shelley* should have been withdrawn from his hands. Yet how much less we should know of the youthful Shelley if Hogg had not written !

How admirable a raconteur he often is ! With what zest he tells his story ! And his mocking vein, as far as Shelley is concerned, has no bitterness in it. He smiles at Shelley's foibles and infirmities, but from his own altitude of superior worldly wisdom, he regards Shelley with affectionate admiration. The 'poor fellow' was also 'the divine poet'. Hogg at least imagined himself glowing 'with generous desire to vindicate aspersed, but unsullied honour, to maintain the just claims of transcendent genius'. He must, indeed, have his laugh at the albatross as it struggles out of its element along the deck ; yet he is well aware all the while that he himself, the amused and much-travelled mariner, could never float aloft in the upper region with majestic poise and scarcely a perceptible motion of the wing. The book is indispensable for one who would know Shelley ; and yet for one who would know Shelley fully and aright it is wholly insufficient. It is a fragment not only in the sense that it tells no more than a portion of the story ; it is fragmentary also in its presentation of Shelley's character. Only by bringing together the testimony of all the witnesses, and by collating this with the poet's writings—his verse, his prose, his earlier and later letters—and with the facts of his life, can the true Shelley be known.

EDWARD DOWDEN.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

- 1792. Percy Bysshe Shelley born at Field Place, Horsham, Aug. 4.
- 1810. Matriculated, Univ. Coll., Oxford.
- 1811. Wrote (with T. J. Hogg) *Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson*; published *The Necessity of Atheism*; expelled with Hogg in consequence.
Married Harriet Westbrook, in Edinburgh.
- 1812. Friendship with William Godwin begun.
- 1813. *Queen Mab* privately printed.
- 1814. Re-married his wife, having attained his majority.
Left England with Mary Godwin, and made settlement on Harriet Shelley; returned to England.
- 1815. Published, anonymously, *A Refutation of Deism*.
- 1816. Published *Alasta*: friendship with Byron begun.
Mrs. Shelley committed suicide, and Shelley married Mary Godwin, Dec. 30.
- 1817. Settled at Marlow with Mary Woolstonecraft Shelley; friendship with Keats begun.
- 1818. Published political pamphlets, and *The Revolt of Islam*.
Left England for Italy. Mrs. Shelley published *Frankenstein*.
- 1819. *Rosalind and Helen*; *The Cenci*.
- 1820. *Prometheus Unbound*; *Œdipus Tyrannus* (anon.).
- 1821. *Epipsychidion* (anon.); *Adonais* (inspired by death of Keats).
- 1822. *Hellas*.
Drowned off Leghorn, July 8; cremated, Aug. 16.
- 1824. *Posthumous Poems* (*The Witch of Atlas, Julian and Maddalo* etc.).
- 1839. *Poetical Works*, edited by Mrs. Shelley.
- 1840. *Essays, etc.*, edited by Mrs. Shelley.
- 1862. *Relics of Shelley*, edited by the late Dr. R. Garnett.
- 1876-80. *Collected Works*, edited by H. Buxton Forman.
- 1886. *Life*, by Prof. E. Dowden.

PREFACE

What are they, if they knew their calling high.
But crushed perfumes exhaling to the sky
Or weeping clouds, that but awhile are seen,
Yet keep the earth, they haste to, bright and green !

' THIS is a motto befitting all the illustrious unhappy. But it is too presumptuous an one for me to use, though it bears some affinity to the strange world I fabricate about me, and to the destiny I conceive to be marked out for me. By his works Shelley has raised himself to that well deserved height, that must make him the wonder and glory of future ages. But his private life would remain unknown, and many of his most excellent qualities sleep with his beloved ashes, if I did not fulfil the task of recording them. His life was in every way romantic, and to have been united to him, and to have been the partner of his fortunes for eight years, has imbued my thoughts and existence with romance ; it is, indeed, only by help of this feeling, and the indulgence that I give to it, that I can in any way endure the prolongation of life marked out for me in the eternal decrees. Strip my situation of its adventitious colours, and what is it ? Alas ! in the drear visitings of cold reality, in moments of torpid despair, I but too truly feel what it is. I am one cut off in the prime of life from hope, enjoyment, and prosperity. The prospect was smiling, but I am in a desert ; the rock on which I built my hopes has crumbled away ; my bark of refuge is wrecked, while the universal flood from out of the opened windows of Heaven is emptying its tempests upon me. But I extricate myself from these ideas, and arranging myself in the majesty of the imagination, I give other, and, in very truth, truer names to the circumstances around me. I was the chosen mate of a celestial spirit. He has left me, and I am here to learn wisdom until I am fitted to join him in his native sky. I was the mother of lovely children ; they are gone to attend him in his beautiful mansion ; yet, in pity, they have left one behind them to adorn

my loneliness. Methinks my calling is high ; I am to justify his ways ; I am to make him beloved to all posterity. My goal is fixed. The prize waves in the air, and I am ready for the course. Who are the spectators ? Sits umpire Love, and all the virtues attend him. There Wisdom and Self-approbation sit enthroned, and the wise and good of all ages throng around. These are to be my future companions, and I must work hard to make myself worthy of so illustrious a company. Thus I would make my misery my crown ; my solitude, my select society of worthies ; my tears, the ambrosia conferring immortality ; my eternal regrets, the nectar to inebriate me, until I arrive at the divine impulse, which is to inspire my tale. I am a priestess, dedicated to his glorification by my sufferings ; the bride of the dead, my daily sacrifice is brought to his temple, and under the shadow of his memory I watch each sun to its decline.'

* * * * *

' I shall write his Life, and thus occupy myself in the only manner from which I can derive consolation. It will be a task that may bring some balm. What, though I weep ? What, though each letter costs a tear ? All is better than inaction—not forgetfulness—that never is, but an inactivity of remembrance. Well, I shall commence my task ; commemorate the virtues of the only creature on earth worth loving or living for, and then, may be, I may join him ; moonshine may be united to her planet, and wander no more, a sad reflection of all she loved on earth. And you, my own boy, I am about to begin a task which, if you live, will be an invaluable treasure in after-times. I must collect my materials ; and then, in the commemoration of the divine virtues of your father, I shall fulfil the only act of pleasure there remains for me, and be ready to follow you, my child, if you should leave me, my task being accomplished.'

* * * * *

' One of Shelley's characteristics was, that although he had a passion for the reformation of mankind, and though he sacrificed both himself and his possessions to the general and individual view of this question, yet he was never a dupe ; his penetration was wonderful ; he read a man's character in his look, his gesture, his phraseology, and I never knew him mistaken. I would rely on his judgment of a character, as on omniscience, and most certainly was never deceived, when others might think that the ingratitude and treachery which he

often encountered, might have disappointed him. It did not, for he expected it. He acted from the fixed principle of endeavouring to benefit and improve each person with whom he had communion ; and his chief method to achieve the latter was to make the person satisfied with himself. He was right : the constant benevolence of manner and action to which this system gave rise, and from which he never deviated, except on the most pressing necessity of self-defence ; this amenity of manner awoke an enthusiasm of love, that of force amended and exalted his friends ; and that mind must have been cold and depraved which did not experience this necessary result from his sensibility united to his urbanity.'

So far Mrs. Shelley has written, but not farther, except a few scraps, which have been inserted at the commencement of this work. The following letter will best explain the motives and the necessity of her silence, and will fully justify it:—

41, PARK STREET, Dec. 11, 1838.

DEAR JEFFERSON,

J—has told you, I suppose, that I am about to publish an Edition of Shelley's Poems. She says, you have not a *Queen Mab*. Yet have you not ? Did not Shelley give you one—one of the first printed ? If you will lend it me, I shall be so very much obliged ; and I will return it safely when the book is printed.

Will you lend me your *Alastor* also ? It will not go to the printer ; I shall only correct the press from it.

Sir Timothy forbids Biography, under a threat of stopping the supplies. What could I do then ? How could I live ? And my poor boy ! But I mean to write a few Notes appertaining to the history of the Poems. If you have any of Shelley's letters, mentioning his poetry, and would communicate them, I should be glad, and thank you.

I am ever truly yours,

MARY W. S.

To T. J. H., Temple.

The Notes appeared, together with the *Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, not long after the date of this letter. They are exceedingly valuable, and have been read with interest and delight. Be silent, or starve ! The prohibition is certainly hard : harder than all things ; harder than all hard things ; harder than all hard things put together, and hardened

into one superlatively hard thing. The poor widowed dove was forbidden to lament her lost mate ; the consolation of bewailing and celebrating him was denied her on pain of death. The brother poets have told us that Philomela was treated with barbarous cruelty, yet perpetual silence was not enjoined ; and every returning summer we hear the nightingale reiterating anew her plaintive, love-lorn sorrows in woods and groves. But we must restrain our indignation. Let us be just. The author of the injunction did not know how severe it was. He never felt as an enthusiastic biographer feels ; he never glowed with generous desire to vindicate aspersed, but unsullied, honour, to maintain the just claims of transcendent genius. So that a man had an abundant share of the creature comforts, or at least a competent maintenance, he had all that could be wished for ; everything else was sentiment, illusion, affectation : such, no doubt, was his honest and intimate conviction. Thus, a certain would-be Junius—a person as incapable of writing the celebrated work which he laboured to father upon himself, as was the proud jackdaw of producing peacocks' feathers,—is reported to have said to his daughter, as she stood weeping by her mother's coffin : ' Come, come, screw her down, screw her down ; let us have no snivelling here ! ' It might be unfair to assert that the fellow was a brute ; he was, probably, only a man destitute of the ordinary feelings of humanity, who was really unable to comprehend how so trivial a matter as the death of a beloved parent could be the cause to a child of unaffected grief, of genuine, gushing tears. If the bereaved lady—illustrious in her parentage, illustrious in herself and in her works, and most illustrious through her union with the divine Poet—had been permitted to complete the narrative which she had begun, she would have given to the world a precious volume, a book more golden than gold. During the eight years that she was the partner of his fortunes, her account of a life, in every way romantic, would have been inestimable. To esteem or to extol the genius and character of Shelley too highly is impossible ; consequently, even her partiality and affection, however excessive, could never have offended against truth and verisimilitude. The earlier, and perhaps the more interesting, portion of a wild and wondrous tale could only have been told by her at second-hand from the relations of others. It was my good fortune to see much of Shelley,—to know more of him, indeed, on the whole, than any one ; and, therefore, I have constantly been pointed

at as ' the person best qualified for such an undertaking '. A hasty, careless, and inaccurate compiler has transferred my proper office to another ; my bishopric some metropolitan versifier is to take, who for a long time preyed most perseveringly on Shelley's substance. If it were a question of assets, of faculties, of effects,—the taking an account of plunder,—an inventory of sums received, of moneys to be repaid, refunded, and disgorged,—a mere calculation of the wind that had been raised,—this indication of the person best qualified to be the biographer of a prince amongst poets would be judicious. His statements might be instructive and astonishing ; he would effect much, but not quite all that is required. I corresponded regularly with Shelley, with greater or less frequency, according to circumstances, and I have preserved his numerous letters. Some persons, who affirm that they received whole volumes of epistles from him, declare that they have, unfortunately, lost them. I do not scruple to make public his remarkable communications ; justice to his character and the interests of truth demand the publication. It is to be lamented, that of my letters to my friend scarcely one has been saved ; because, having been written at the moment and on the spur of the occasion, they would have given a fresh and graphic representation of many events and actions, of which the recollection is now faint and imperfect. We often conversed together about the projected biography of my incomparable friend ; but no definite arrangement was ever made with his family for giving a full and authentic account of his innocent and imaginative life. It was agreed, however, that, by way of commencement, I should relate, in some periodical, as much as I could remember of those happy days which we spent together at Oxford. With this view Mrs. Shelley introduced me to the estimable and accomplished editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, and procured for me the very great advantage of his acquaintance, from whom, on that occasion, and subsequently, I met with much politeness and real kindness. But to write articles in a magazine or a review, is to walk in leading-strings ; to march in rank and file under the command of subaltern officers. However, I submitted to the requirements and restraints of bibliopolar discipline, and I contributed six or seven papers ; being content to speak of my young fellow-collegian, not exactly as I would, but as I might. I never had the honour to be the editor of a magazine, or of any other periodical publication, and, therefore, I cannot

pretend to be a judge of the feelings and responsibilities of a person in such a position. They seem, indeed, to be more serious and oppressive than those who have not felt the weight of empire would suppose ; they can be duly appreciated by Atlas alone, for he has actually borne whole constellations of stars and splendour upon his labouring shoulders. I struggled at first, and feebly, for full liberty of speech ; for a larger licence of commendation and admiration ; for entire freedom of the press without censorship. With what success I contended the following letter will show. It relates to a matter of public concernment, and therefore I do not hesitate to make it known to the public, whom it concerns. It is one of many letters on the same subject ; but one will suffice :

Jan. 12, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am very sorry you are displeased with the omissions in your article. Let us come to a right understanding on this head at once. It is not pleasant to me ever to alter an author's MS. for two reasons : First, because it is a trouble I could with greater profit to myself devote to my own compositions. Secondly, because it is an office that can never gratify the author. But if an editor lays before him one great—paramount—consistent object in a periodical, alteration and omission become of frequent necessity. You must remember, that an oneness of opinion in all the papers is then requisite. Now, what I omitted in your paper, and what I altered, were chiefly passages in which I could not agree with you (about Oxford, and persons in Oxford, for instance) ; a few verbal changes occurred also—but they were chiefly in epithets and phrases, in which I thought a little exaggeration, natural to description and to friendship, had crept in. But on these matters you must allow me to say that, if an editor be worth a straw, he must be absolute and unquestioned ; and however deep the regret I should feel in losing any contribution of yours, I must do so, rather than resign a privilege that I believe to be also a duty. I dwell the more on this, because I have not yet done more than glance over a few lines in your second paper : and I there see that your natural affection for Shelley carries you a little beyond that estimate of what he has left to the world, which as yet we are authorized to express. It is probable that this strain may be continued through the whole, and therefore require modification. Let us, then, be candid with each other. I, on my part, will not alter, or rather omit, which

is my chief sin, without necessity—and will you, on your part, kindly suffer me to use my own discretion, when that necessity is apparent ?

Truly yours,
E. L. BULWER.

If it should seem to me, that alteration *to any extent* is necessary, I shall return you the MS. to alter yourself. All I claim is, the power of omission, or abridgment, to such extent as I judge discreet ; and that of *alteration* only in slight matters ; to omit, in short, as much as I like, and alter as *little* as I can. When you *republish* the articles, to which, I dare say, there will be no objection, you can *amend* them, etc. In regard to the proposed article on his Poetry, I fear that we should not agree. You evidently admire him as a Poet far more than I think criticism warrants us in doing. He is great in parts ; but, the *Cenci* excepted, does not, in my opinion, effect a great whole. But the additional anecdotes on his life and opinions will be, I trust and believe, acceptable.

To T. J. H., Temple.

The *Shelley Papers*, for they soon came to be spoken of and referred to under this title, were successful. They were satisfactory to the Poet's friends and admirers, notwithstanding the somewhat subdued tone which I was constrained to adopt, and the farther dilutions that were made, always no doubt in strict accordance with the rules of art and the canons of editorial revision. I confess that I always have been, and still am, sensitive, too much so perhaps, in the matter of correction, or alteration, by editors, joint-editors, sub-editors. I am content at all times to throw pearls before swine, only I must be permitted, for my own credit's sake, to throw real pearls before them, not glass beads and other worthless counterfeits, substitutes for my marine treasures. I was once requested to write something or other on behalf of a knot of people, who busied themselves for a time in diffusing at a low price in shabby pamphlets, what they accounted useful knowledge. As a powerful inducement I was solemnly assured that whatever I wrote would certainly be revised and corrected *seriatim*, by every one of the conceited, self-satisfied diffusers whose names were printed on the covers of 'their unsightly publications'. The proposal was a tempting one, but I was not the possessor of any knowledge sufficiently useful to bear

the ordeal of so much useless intermeddling. Too many cooks spoil the broth ; and the soup-kitchen of science in *forma pauperis* was soon shut up without my assistance.

The *Shelley Papers* were pillaged freely by amateur biographers, sometimes without acknowledgment, and always without permission ; the publication was anonymous, but my name has been used as freely in connection with them, as if I had myself prefixed it to these sketches. I have sometimes been informed by a total stranger, that he was about to compose a Life of Shelley, and intended to reprint the *Shelley Papers* at length ; and I have been ordered to send forthwith to his address, all anecdotes, letters, and unpublished pieces in aid of his precious work. I found it advisable to take no notice whatever of such applications ; for a civil answer has brought upon me, more than once, a reply full of virulent abuse from the suburban scribbler. It would seem that in the case of Shelley the laws of property were suspended or abrogated ; his earlier works were pirated with impunity ; his books, letters, and papers were stolen ; his writings were found, and without scruple made public by the finder. The forgery of his correspondence, a curious matter, of which hereafter, was an extensive and a profitable speculation. It may be as well to state that, from the 28th of July, 1814, until a few days before his death, Shelley kept regularly a journal of his daily life, recording, day by day, all that he did, read, and wrote ; mentioning the letters received and sent by himself, the places which he visited, and the persons whom he saw. These MSS. are valuable on many accounts ; they are useful in being a check upon misrepresentations and inventions, and a test of the veracity and correctness of volunteer and amateur biographers ; they are sovereign indeed in detecting fabrications and forgeries. Many pages are little more than dates, lists of books, and names of places and persons, but much curious matter is interspersed ; whatever is interesting shall be presented hereafter without reserve, nothing of value being kept back. Nor were the friends of Shelley exempt from predatory incursions ; their journals, memoranda, note-books ; their pictures, drawings, and precious relics ; were appropriated as derelict, or seized as plunder by some bold buccanier. Many admirers, devoted hero-worshippers, are offended and mortified by the innumerable unlike and unfavourable portraitures of the divine lineaments of a lovely character drawn by unskilful hands ; but, I confess, I do not sympathize with them ; I

am not annoyed by the clumsy workmanship and spurious imitations. Suffer these vulgar daubers, I would say, and forbid them not ; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. It must of necessity be thus with all hero-worship. To be often ill-praised is an essential condition to the universality of renown. For example, if St. Paul might be commended by eloquent preachers only, by profound theologians, by erudite and exquisitely judicious eulogists alone, his merits would be seldom celebrated ; but inasmuch as the dull, drowsy prater, the illiterate sectary, the ignorant, the indiscreet, the intemperate, may trumpet forth his praises without restraint, the Apostle of the Gentiles now is, and ever will be, illustrious far and wide.

The Life of Shelley will frequently suggest that momentous subject, the reformation of our two magnificent universities, especially of the glorious university of Oxford, and will direct our attention to the real point of the case. A strict and searching inquiry into the actual condition of these most important institutions is imperiously demanded ; a thorough, unsparing, unflinching investigation. It is necessary to ascertain forthwith, not whether a little more of this or of that, and a little less of the other, is taught there ; whether the regents meet to talk stuff in the House of Convocation on Tuesday or on Thursday, in cramped Latin, or in lax English, and in larger or smaller numbers ; but to answer distinctly the one vital and decisive question, which will be evaded as long as possible, How is the enormous mass of splendid patronage bestowed ? Have they ever given anything to the right person ? If they have, what, and to whom ? The right of patronage is the most sacred of all sacred trusts ; the criminal abuse of it, through jobbing and nepotism, is an eating, destroying cancer, fatal alike to Church and State. Society has manfully asserted at last this great truth, and is fully prepared and resolved to follow out in practice the assertion of principle. And not merely prospectively, but, to a certain extent, retrospectively also, will the sage and salutary reform be accomplished. Prospectively, by sternly forbidding offences under heavy penalties, and severely punishing in future all offenders ; and retrospectively also, as sanguine and zealous reformers confidently declare, by removing without delay or compunction every recipient tainted by nepotism. People talk loudly of the sanctity of vested rights ; and the right of these objects of partial patronage no doubt is sacred ; it is the right to undergo

condign chastisement. They speak boldly and fiercely of compensation ; and perhaps in strictness, compensation ought to be made by disgorging, under the strong compulsion of the sounding lash, every penny of what has been undeservedly and corruptly received.

Shelley was great as a poet—divine, indeed ; great as a philosopher, as a moralist, as a scholar, as a complete and finished gentleman, great in every respect as a man ; but he was most conspicuously great in that particular excellence, which, in all ages and in all nations, has been invariably the characteristic distinction of the greatest of mankind—he was pre-eminently a lady's man. The following pages will show, but faintly, feebly, and imperfectly, I fear, that he was uniformly the chosen favourite of the charming sex. The moment he entered a house, he inspired the most lively interest into every woman in the family ; not only the mistress of the house, her daughters, and other lady relatives, but even the housekeeper and the humblest females in the establishment were animated alike by an active desire to promote and secure his well-being, in every way and to the utmost in their power. In England women have never had too much influence in advancing the fortunes of men ; commonly too little, far too little, for the public welfare. It was always a maxim in France, and a wise one, that no man could succeed greatly in life who was not a favourite with the fair. The young Poet's fortunes would certainly have been less rude—they would have been mitigated, and softened, and brightened, if a due preponderance had been conceded to the gentle and humanising patronage and fond devotion of his countless lady friends.

To 'amend' the *Shelley Papers*, to restore them, as nearly as possible to their original condition, as they were written by myself, and as they stood before they underwent editorial censorship, was long my intention ; but many hero-worshippers have informed me, that they desire to procure a copy of the identical sketches, which they had formerly viewed with satisfaction, and which were almost inaccessible to purchasers, being embedded and walled in, as it were, in the body of a voluminous periodical. One meritorious worshipper of singular industry, a citizen of the United States of America, assures me that 'he copied them in manuscript, that he might possess them, and lend them to his friends'. Accordingly, I yielded, but not without reluctance, to their request, and the *Shelley Papers* will be reprinted here precisely as they ap-

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peared in the year 1832, in the *New Monthly Magazine*. They will be found entire and unaltered in this work, from *p.* 42 to *p.* 90, and from *p.* 127 to *p.* 193. All Shelley's journals, letters, fragments, every scrap of paper, indeed, relating to him, or to his affairs, whether it was written by himself, or by other persons, have been placed in my hands and at my disposal by his family ; my materials are at once authentic and abundant. This is much, but it will be far more, to write a living Life of the young Poet ; to give of him a breathing, moving, speaking portrait.

It is especially my desire to present a pleasing picture ; but in this particular some explanation, some qualification is necessary. How will he, or she, or they, like his statements ? is not the question which a biographer should ask himself ; the question really being, How ought they to like them ? what can they fairly and reasonably expect from him ? It is his duty to seek to please ; not simply, unconditionally, generally, and in every way to please ; but to please so far only, and in such a manner, as a judicious and impartial reader ought to be pleased.

I have been informed after these volumes went to the press, that a large box has been found, containing many letters, journals, and other papers of great curiosity and value. They relate, I believe, to a subsequent period of Shelley's life. They will be carefully perused, and whatever is of interest and importance will be presented hereafter in due course and chronological order.

The following letter is so interesting, and so much to the present purpose, that it ought not to be withheld, or even postponed to the period to which it relates :

March 9, 1826.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I saw W. this morning. He says he will write to me when he knows what to do. He has given me no promise. He says Sir T. is much annoyed by the name being brought before the public in the paragraphs respecting your novel. I have little doubt, however, that you will get the money ; but I think you will be punished by a short delay.

I told W. that your name was not in the title-page, and that its being brought forward at all was the fault of the publisher, and very contrary to your wishes. I told him he must remember that you were solitary and dependent ; and that employing

your time according to your tastes and talents, with a view to better your condition, was what no one could reasonably condemn. This he acknowledged ; but said the name was the matter : it annoyed Sir T.

Yours ever faithfully,

To Mrs. Shelley.

L. T.

Not only did Sir Timothy Shelley interdict, as has been shown, by his threat of 'stopping the supplies', the pious office upon which his cruelly bereaved daughter-in-law had set her heart, of composing a full and faithful biography of her 'late espoused saint', but he endeavoured to prevent, by actually stopping them, all authorship ; and altogether to preclude the exercise of her unequalled talents. This attempt, which many will condemn as strangely barbarous and utterly barbarian, was happily unsuccessful.

One of Mrs. Shelley's admirable novels, it seems, the date points out her wonderful invention, *The Last Man*, had been advertised by the publisher in her name—a name that had already attained sufficient celebrity to insure the sale of any work to which it was prefixed, and thereupon her scanty stipend was immediately withdrawn. 'The supplies', to the payment of which such hard conditions—conditions so hurtful to the interests of literature—were annexed, it is right to state were not freely given by the father of her lost husband to support, in decent competence, the widow of his eldest son and the mother of the heir to his name, title, and estates. They were money lent to her on the strength of her expectations, and the security of her bond, to be repaid, and if I mistake not, with interest. The money was duly repaid ; and I regret to add—it has been received. For farther proof of a constant and abiding hostility to all intellectual efforts, I have been referred to in a passage in a letter from myself to Mrs. Shelley, of August 22nd, 1824. 'It gave me great pleasure to hear that Sir Timothy has proposed to purchase Field Place of you ; I hope that matters will proceed without interruption, until you find yourself quite at your ease as to pecuniary affairs. The condition for which he stipulated, that *The Posthumous Works* should be suppressed, is highly characteristic, and forcibly reminds me of old times, when the old Philistine used to make demands equally rational and enlightened'.

To return to Shelley—it will be seen that the poor fellow was very unfortunate in his political connections. His own

family and their alliances, without exception, were Whigs, devoted adherents of Norfolk House. Never surely were any creatures so senseless, helpless, and hollow as the Buff and Blue faction ; mere grievance-mongers, desiring always that he and others should have a great grievance, in order that he with them clamouring about such matters might help them to office, to serve their own ends ; by no means to do him any good, and least of all to redress his grievance. The few Tories with whom he became personally acquainted, treated him with kindness, and were well disposed to consider all differences of opinion as not unamiable peculiarities, and to throw their ægis over him : but unhappily he was afraid of them. Consequently, he gave himself up too much to people who have since been called Radicals ; these were necessarily vulgar ; they dreaded and detested his conspicuously aristocratical and gentlemanlike dispositions, and being commonly needy men, chiefly perhaps because they were lazy and dissipated, they preyed upon him most unmercifully. We Tories were not without our faults towards him, our short-comings towards others, and so we have long ceased to exist. It has sometimes been asked, What is the difference between a Tory and a Conservative ? are they not both of the same party ? In like manner we may ask, What is the difference between a bull and an ox ? are they not both the same animal ? An extreme freedom of opinion, or to speak more correctly, of declaration and discussion, together with a taste for chemistry, had been acquired whilst Shelley was a schoolboy, by his intercourse and intimacy with a physician, for whom he long retained a warm regard and a profound reverence. The editor, in her graceful note on *The Revolt of Islam*, informs us, as my friend had already told me, that, 'There exists in this poem a memorial of a friend of his youth. The character of the old man who liberates Laon from his tower-prison, and tends on him in sickness, is founded on that of Doctor Lind, who, when Shelley was at Eton, had often stood by to befriend and support him, and whose name he never mentioned without love and veneration'. Shelley was desirous to make me acquainted with the medical philosopher ; 'he will soon remove all your prejudices !' He has not done this, for I never saw Dr. James Lind of Windsor.

Whether the pupil corresponded with his early preceptor after he left Eton, I know not ; I never saw any letters from the sage, or heard that any had been received. Having care-

fully inoculated his young patient and satisfied himself that the disease had taken, it should seem that he left him to his fate.

In the ancient world, the sacrilegious impiety of one who had disclosed the Eleusinian mysteries, must be expiated by his death. It was not prudent to sit under the same roof-tree, or to embark in the same boat, with a man who, notwithstanding that a golden key had come upon his tongue, had divulged the sacred secrets of Ceres : so fiercely was the wrath of the immortal gods kindled against him. Thus, in our degenerate days, is a solemn and sagacious reviewer, who possibly may have his private reasons for disliking disclosures, inflamed against some too communicative biographer, for having rashly revealed that Cottle once lent his tea-kettle and toasting-fork to Coleridge. With all gravity the critic dogmatically affirms, that 'sacred silence should be thrown around such facts, through an exquisite delicacy of mind', and so forth. The names of illustrious heroes are written among the stars ; their history, in the heavens, to be read by all ; their acts, words, and thoughts belong not to their families and private friends—not even to their needy pensioners, however worthless—but to their worshippers, to the public, and to posterity. Nevertheless, I have endeavoured, as far as it was practicable, to spare the feelings of others, and to avoid compromising them by naming them in any delicate conjuncture, without absolute and unavoidable necessity. Many obliging persons have kindly offered me information and assistance, and I trust that they will do me the justice to believe, that want of leisure alone prevented a due acknowledgment of their favour, and well-merited thanks.

A great deal of nonsense has been written and spoken about the irreligious opinions ascribed to my poor friend. In metaphysical discussions, he was uniformly and eminently bold and uncompromising. I will not venture to engage in theological disquisitions, for which I have neither inclination nor ability, but I will at once dispose of the matter by simply asking one very plain question. Did anybody ever know a poet—and Shelley was a truly great Poet—who was an irreligious man? Let us consider the immortality of the soul and a future state as subjects of feeling, not of reasoning ; of feeling imprinted and rooted in us for the wisest purposes, and far more conclusive than any reasoning ; and we may readily get rid of all controversy by asking, in like manner, Does any one who knew



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Shelley, believe that he has ceased to exist—that he is really dead—that we shall never see him more ? If it shall appear in the course of my narrative, that the young Poet's heart ever went astray, I will neither condemn, nor justify, its wanderings ; I will only observe, with Mister John Boccaccio, late of Florence : ' Love can do much more, dear Reader, than either you or I can do ! '

April, 1858.



THE LIFE
OF
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

CHAPTER I

Have I forgot the words ?
Faith ! they are sadder than I thought they were.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY was born at Field Place, near Horsham, in the county of Sussex, on Saturday, the 4th of August, 1792.

'Saturday's moon comes a day too soon', says the proverb ; the new moon, which falls on a Saturday, misses by one day the good luck that ought to befall us, when the conjunction of our satellite with the sun takes place on a Sunday. Thus, by coming one day too early into a world that knew him not, did the Divine Poet want all the good fortune which is the portion of a Sunday child. Temporal advantages, worldly prosperity, ephemeral joys, fading honours were not for him ; but the undying laurel, the amaranthine garland, the golden crown were his : the crown of glory, that passeth not away. The royal ornaments, which of right adorn a king of song, were his noble inheritance, of this he can never be despoiled ; for

Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm from an anointed king.

The science of the astrologer must be vain indeed, if the horoscope of the 'heaven-born child', as far as regards all the higher blessings, all real good gifts, was not favourable and flattering.

His father—to return for a while to plain facts—was Timothy Shelley ; his mother, a lady of rare beauty, Elizabeth, the

daughter of Charles Pilfold, Esquire. They were married in the year 1791, and of this union their eldest son, Percy Bysshe, was the first child. The poet had four sisters ; Elizabeth, Mary, Hellen, and Margaret, all of whom lived to be distinguished for remarkable beauty, so that it was frequently observed, ' very few families indeed can boast four such handsome girls ! ' He had only one brother, John, the youngest child.

Other members of the family will sometimes of necessity be mentioned incidentally ; but where the subject of biography is alone and of himself sufficient to ennoble a house, and by his immortal reputation to render it for ever illustrious, trifling details concerning inferior honours would be improper and impertinent. Moreover, it would be foreign to the true purpose of the present narrative to compose a genealogical history of an ancient and honourable family. To tell how Sir Guyon de Shelley, one of the most famous of the Paladins, made himself glorious. How he carried about with him at all times three conchs fastened to the inside of his shield, tipt respectively with brass, with silver, and with gold. When he blew the first shell, all giants, however huge, fled before him. When he put the second to his lips, all spells were broken, all enchantments dissolved ; and when he made the third conch, the golden one, vocal, the law of God was immediately exalted, and the law of the Devil annulled and abrogated, wherever the potent sound reached. Some historians affirm, that the third shell had a still more remarkable effect ; that its melting notes instantly softened the heart of every female, gentle or simple, who heard them, to such an extent, that it was impossible for her to refuse whatever its owner might ask. This power was dangerous indeed ; but a knight *sans peur* could find delight only in the society of a lady *sans lache* ; in the pure ages of chivalry, therefore, nothing derogatory to the limpid honour of knights or dames would ever be required. It is certain that history has not recorded that the good Sir Guyon ever abused the irresistible potency of his golden horn. These wondrous conchs, or shells, are still remembered in the name, and borne in the arms, of the several branches of the house of Shelley. Sir Guyon, we are told, was the personal friend, as well as the companion in arms, of Orlando, notwithstanding the well-known attachment of the fair Angelica for the lord of shells ; but if the beauty of Sir Guyon was transcendent, superhuman, and indeed divine, his continence,

chastity, purity, and unsullied, knight-like honour, as the Archbishop of Rheims, Turpin, (who is never in error) affirms, were such that there could be no place for jealousy between the gallant friends.

Carlovingian families condemn the Crusaders as frigid imitators of heroic gestes, as a degenerate race, but persons, who do not affect to trace their own lineage so high as the eighth century, may still be permitted to admire the pious devotion and exalted courage of the Champions of the Cross. Passing over, however, the period of the Crusades, we read in times comparatively modern, in the sixteenth century, of Sir Richard Shelley, a knight of Malta, and Grand Prior of the English Language, as being remarkable, not only for bravery, which was the common attribute of the Order, and consequently no peculiar distinction, but for disinterested generosity. Bosio, the secretary and historian of the Knights of St. John, has recorded that notwithstanding his extreme old age, which would have fully excused his attendance, he came to the support and relief of the Island of Malta, when it was besieged by the Turks, A.D. 1565.

When one of the family visited Malta lately, he was informed there that they were unable to find the bones of the Grand Prior, Sir Richard Shelley: with what object they sought for them was not stated.

Of the earliest infancy, the babyhood, of the wonderful child we know nothing. As a boy he was gentle, affectionate, intelligent, amiable; ever loving, and universally beloved.

His relatives have supplied interesting details. To give these just as they were received, will be a better illustration of the truth of things than a re-arrangement and classification of facts would afford.

Nov. 26th, 1856.

MY DEAREST J.,

After reading the reminiscences of our Poet Brother in the periodical you lent me, a strong wish arose in my mind to add, even in the trifling degree, which lies in my power, to the scanty details of his outward life. The absurd and imaginary view of Bysshe's character, and the facts, which are sufficient to contradict the fables contained in some books, have been contradicted only, I imagine, from the feeling that reasonable persons could perceive, that a child—who, at six years old, was sent daily to learn Latin at a clergyman's house,

and as soon as it was expedient removed to Dr. Greenland's, from thence to Eton, and subsequently to college—could scarcely have been the *uneducated* son, that some writers would endeavour to persuade those, who read their books, to believe he ought to have been, if his parents despised education. Such books are altogether written with bad feeling,—the petty malice of a little mind avenging itself for slights too well deserved to be forgiven. My knowledge of these publications is not vivid enough to dissect the contents ; but I recollect when they first appeared we were urged to write a contradiction of the most glaring mistakes,—but who would willingly go to war with a petty state ? Time, generally, elicits truth, and there are many friends of our family, that could indignantly repel the reflections cast upon those, who treat them with silent contempt. I will write again soon.

Yours always,

HELLEN SHELLEY.

MY DEAREST J.,

At this distant period I can scarcely remember my *first* impressions of Bysshe, but he would frequently come to the nursery and was full of a peculiar kind of pranks. One piece of mischief, for which he was rebuked, was running a stick through the ceiling of a low passage to find some new chamber, which could be made effective for some flights of his vivid imagination. The tales, to which we have sat and listened, evening after evening, seated on his knee, when we came to the dining-room for dessert, were anticipated with that pleasing dread, which so excites the minds of children, and fastens so strongly and indelibly on the memory. There was a spacious garret under the roof of Field Place, and a room, which had been closed for years, excepting an entrance made by the removal of a board in the garret-floor. This unknown land was made the fancied habitation of an Alchemist, old and grey, with a long beard. Books and a lamp, with all the attributes of a picturesque fancy, were poured into our listening ears. We were to go and see him 'some day' ; but we were content to wait, and a cave was to be dug in the orchard for the better accommodation of this Cornelius Agrippa. Another favourite theme was the 'Great Tortoise', that lived in Warnham Pond ; and any unwonted noise was accounted for by the presence of this great beast, which was made into the fanciful proportions most adapted to excite

awe and wonder. [I never heard Shelley mention the 'Great Tortoise', but he spoke often of the 'Great Old Snake'. It was a snake of unusual magnitude, which had inhabited the gardens at Field Place for several generations, and which, according to tradition, had been known, as the 'Old Snake', three hundred years ago. It was killed, accidentally, through the carelessness of the gardener, in mowing the grass: killed by the same fatal instrument with which the universal destroyer, Time, kills everything besides,—by that two-handed engine, the scythe. There is so strong an affinity between serpents and all imaginative and demoniacal characters, that I cannot but regret to have entirely forgotten the legends of the 'Old Snake'; narratives perfectly true, no doubt,—not with the common-place truth of ordinary matters of fact, but with the far higher truth of poetical verity and mythological necessity.—H.] Bysshe was certainly fond of eccentric amusements, but they delighted us, as children, quite as much as if our minds had been naturally attuned to the same tastes; for we dressed ourselves in strange costumes to personate spirits, or fiends, and Bysshe would take a fire-stove and fill it with some inflammable liquid and carry it flaming into the kitchen and to the back-door; but discovery of this dangerous amusement soon put a stop to many repetitions. When my brother commenced his studies in chemistry, and practised electricity upon us, I confess my pleasure in it was entirely negatived by terror at its effects. Whenever he came to me with his piece of folded brown packing-paper under his arm, and a bit of wire and a bottle (if I remember right), my heart would sink with fear at his approach; but shame kept me silent, and, with as many others as he could collect, we were placed hand-in-hand round the nursery table to be electrified; but when a suggestion was made that chilblains were to be cured by this means, my terror overwhelmed all other feelings, and the expression of it released me from all future annoyance. I have heard that Bysshe's memory was singularly retentive. Even as a little child, Gray's lines on the Cat and the Gold Fish were repeated, word for word, after once reading; a fact I have frequently heard from my mother. He used, at my father's bidding, to repeat long Latin quotations, probably from some drama; for he would act, and the expression of his face and movement of his arms are distinct recollections, though the subject of his declamations was a sealed book to his infant hearers. Poor fellow! Why did he not live fifty

years later : when he would have been assisted by the wonderful improvements of the age in directing his gifted and inquisitive mind ?—Good-bye, dearest, for to-day.

MY DEAREST JANE,

The tranquillity of our house must have frequently been rudely invaded by experiments, for, on one occasion, on the morning our Poet and experimentalist left home (for Eton, probably), the washing-room was discovered to have been filled with smoke, by a fire in the grate with the valve closed ; the absence of draught had probably prevented mischief, but much was made of this accident, probably to deter any admiring imitators ; and there might have been circumstances connected with it relating to chemical preparations, which did not reach us. My younger brother, John, was a child in petticoats, when I remember Bysshe playing with him under the fir-trees on the lawn, pushing him gently down to let him rise and beg for a succession of such falls, rolling with laughing glee on the grass ; then, as a sequel to this game, the little carriage was drawn through the garden walks at the rate a big boy could draw a little one, and in an unfortunate turn the carriage was upset, and the occupant tossed into the cabbages, or strawberry-bed. Screams, of course, brought sympathetic aid, and, though the child was unhurt, the boy was rebuked ; and when the former was brought down after dinner, in the nurse's arms, ' Bit ', (Bysshe) was apostrophized as a culprit. His great delight was to teach his infant brother schoolboy words, and his first attempt at his knowledge of the devil, was an innocent ' Debbec ! '

MY DEAREST JANE,

I feel more confidence in writing when I commence a page, as I have now done ; and after having talked over the small things we remember of our brother, I place them on paper without chronological order ; for you will readily believe that to me it would be impossible, as I do not remember even seeing him after I was eleven years of age. I went to school before Margaret, so that she recollects how Bysshe came home in the midst of the half-year to be nursed ; and when he was allowed to leave the house, he came to the dining-room window, and kissed her through the pane of glass. She remembers his face there, with nose and lips pressed against the window, and at that time she must have been about

five years old. In the holidays, he would walk with us, if he could steal away with us ; and on one occasion he walked with us through the fields to Strood ; where, in those days, there was a park stile, to encourage good neighbourhood : there was a sunk fence to divide the lawn from the meadows, and gates were despised, where difficulty would augment the pleasure ; and we were assisted up this perpendicular wall. I was big enough to be pulled over, but Margaret was gently thrown across on the grass. Our shoes were sadly soiled, and the little one of the party was tired, and required carrying ; but she was to be careful to hold her feet so that the trousers might not be damaged. This trait does not seem characteristic, but it is nevertheless true ; and subsequently, Bysshe ordered clothes according to his own fancy at Eton, and the beautifully fitting silk pantaloons, as he stood, as almost all men and boys do, with their coat tails near the fire, excited my silent, though excessive admiration. He must always have been full of imaginative fancies, even before the youthful genius displayed itself in poetry. That wonderful emanation from the brain of a youth of eighteen, Queen Mab, is quite unequalled in gorgeous images and marvellous expression. The free writing down of overflowing thoughts by a boy, where no prudence could be expected ; and the peculiar, not to say unfortunate, tendency of that early stroke of undoubted genius, cannot detract from the *poet's* fame, though the wisdom and experience of riper years might have modified the poem, as well as his whole after-life. His early death left him unformed ; but who can tell what were the thoughts of one, who had but a few minutes of preparation between this world and the next. It may be (and, oh, that it might be prophecy !) that Love and Mercy took into account the temptations and dangers of a mind almost alone in its peculiar nature, and opened his eyes to that belief, without which he had better never been born !

MY DEAREST JANE,

I meant in my last letter to have given you an illustration of Bysshe's boyish traits of imagination, but flew off to a later period. On one occasion he gave the most minute details of a visit he had paid to some ladies, with whom he was acquainted at our village : he described their reception of him, their occupations, and the wandering in their pretty garden, where there was a well-remembered filbert-walk and an undulating turf-bank, the delight of our morning visit.

There must have been something peculiar in this little event, for I have often heard it mentioned as a singular fact, and it was ascertained almost immediately, that the boy had never been to the house. It was not considered as a falsehood to be punished ; but, I imagine, his conduct altogether must have been so little understood, and unlike that of the generality of children, that these tales were left unnoticed. He was, at a later period, in the habit of walking out at night, and the prosaic minds of ordinary mortals could not understand the pleasure to be derived from contemplating the stars, when he probably was repeating to himself lines, which were so soon to astonish those, who looked on him as a boy. The old servant of the family would follow him, and say, that ' Master Bysshe only took a walk, and came back again '. He was full of cheerful fun, and had all the comic vein so agreeable in a household : details of this kind would be trifling in many instances : but, as a child at school, I remember some verses, that were sent by him to one of my elder sisters, illustrating something unfavourable to a French teacher, who was accused of being fond of those pupils, who could supply her with fruit and cakes. I believe it was clever, for the sisters were proud enough of it to be imprudent, and by some means it became known to *Madame*, and I can just remember the commotion it made and the ' very bold boy our *broder* must be '. I have somewhere in my possession a very early effusion of Bysshe's, with a cat painted on the top of the sheet, I will try and find it ; but there is no promise of future excellence in the lines, the versification is defective. At one time, he, with my eldest sister, wrote a play secretly, and sent it to Matthews, the comedian ; who, after a time, returned it, with the opinion, that it would not do for acting. I wonder, whether Matthews knew the age of the boy and girl, who ventured upon writing a play. The subject was never known to me ; and most likely the youthful authors made a good blaze with the MS.

MY DEAREST JANE,

Every one has heard of Mrs. Hemans, if they have not read her poetry. She published a large volume, when quite a girl and Miss Browne. Early talent attracted Bysshe's admiration and sympathy : he wrote to Miss Felicia Dorothea Browne, and he received an answer, but it was to an effect which gave no encouragement to farther correspondence : and he was probably disappointed, as all young, ardent, and

admiring spirits would be in such a case. He fancied that I might, with encouragement, write verses, and his first lesson to me, I perfectly remember. Monk Lewis's Poems had a great attraction for him, and any tale of spirits, fiends, etc., seemed congenial to his taste at an early age. I was so young, that I really can remember nothing of the verses I made, farther than to give you as a sample of them :

There was an old woman, as I have heard say,
Who worked metamorphoses every day.

—and these two lines are probably left in my memory, because Bysshe expressed so much astonishment at my knowledge of the word *metamorphoses*. There were several short poems, I think, of which he gave me the subject ; and one line about ' an old woman in her bony gown ' , (even the rhyme to which line I forget), elicited the praise for which I wrote. Subsequently he had them printed, and a mistake I made about sending one of my heroes, or heroines, out by night and day in the same stanza, he would not alter, but excused it by quoting something from Shakespeare. When I saw my name in the title-page ' H—ll—n Sh—ll—y ' , I felt much more frightened than pleased, and as soon as the publication was seen by my superiors, it was bought up and destroyed. I should not think there could have been anything in it worth either keeping, or destroying, but it will tend to show, that my brother was full of pleasant attention to children, though his mind was so far above theirs. He had a wish to educate some child, and often talked seriously of purchasing a little girl for that purpose : a tumbler, who came to the back door to display her wonderful feats, attracted him, and he thought she would be a good subject for the purpose, but all these wild fancies came to nought. He would take his pony and ride about the beautiful lanes and fields surrounding the house, and would *talk* of his intention, but he did not consider that board and lodging would be indispensable, and this difficulty, probably, was quite sufficient to prevent the talk from becoming reality.

MY DEAREST JANE,

I think you have heard me mention a few things concerning Bysshe, which may only be interesting to you, and me, and two or three others ; for when I write about him, whose poems and writings, and attainments, which were never known to the world in all their wonderful profusion, I feel that *my*

anecdotes are scarcely indicative of his character ; but you remember that my knowledge of Bysshe ended at ten years of age, and probably the last time I saw him was at Clapham, where we were at school, and he came occasionally to see us, and ask questions about our comfort. One day his ire was greatly excited at a black mark hung round one of our throats, as a penalty for some small misdemeanour. He expressed great disapprobation, more of the system than that one of his sisters should be so punished. Another time he found me, I think, in an iron collar, which certainly was a dreadful instrument of torture in my opinion. It was not worn as a punishment, but because I *poked* ; but Bysshe declared it would make me grow crooked, and ought to be discontinued immediately. The old lady who kept the school, would not, I believe, have hurt one of her pupils for any amount of approbation, so that she was not likely to continue an objectionable practice, if boldly disapproved of, and I was released forthwith. He came once with the elders of the family, and Harriet Grove, his early love, was of the party : how fresh and pretty she was ! Her assistance was invoked to keep the wild boy quiet, for he was full of pranks, and upset the port wine on the tray cloth, for our school mistress was hospitable, and had offered refreshments ; then we all walked in the garden, and there was much ado to calm the spirits of the wild boy. His disappointment a few years afterwards, in losing the lady of his love, had a great effect upon him ; and my eldest sister has frequently told me how narrowly she used to watch him and accompany him in his walks with his dog and gun. I believe this matter has been discussed amongst others, probably with little knowledge of the truth. It was not put an end to by *mutual* consent ; but both parties were very young, and her father did not think the marriage would be for his daughter's happiness. He, however, with truly honourable feeling, would not have persisted in his objection, if his daughter had considered herself bound by a promise to my brother, but this was not the case, and time healed the wound, by means of another Harriet, whose name and similar complexion, perhaps, attracted the attention of my brother. I do not consider any details of a later date would be in my province, for I only know his history as I have been told it.

MY DEAREST JANE,

I began my last letter intending to tell you of a morn-

ing's event. As we were sitting in the little breakfast-room our eyes were attracted by a country-man passing the window with a truss of hay on a prong over his shoulders ; the intruder was wondered at and called after, when it was discovered that Bysshe had put himself in costume to take some hay to a young lady at Horsham, who was advised to use hay-tea for chilblains. When visitors were announced during his visit to the vicar's daughter, he concealed himself under the table, but the concealment did not probably last long. We have lately been on a visit to Cuckfield Park, and it was singular enough that our host, without having heard this story, mentioned his single recollection of having once, when quite a little boy, seen Bysshe, who came to his uncle, Colonel Sergison, whilst on a visit to his lawyer in Horsham, and asked, in Sussex language, to be hired as gamekeeper's boy. My informant thought his suit was successful, and then, of course, there was an explosion of laughter. I remember *incidents*, but nothing that either preceded or followed them, connectedly. My reminiscences must necessarily be limited to a few early years, for the tales of others, with regard to my brother, do not appear to me truthful. I read of his discordant voice and stooping figure, and I think excitement, in one case, and deep thinking in another, might have made this true in a measure ; but, as I remember Bysshe, his figure was slight and beautiful,—his hands were models, and his feet are treading the earth again in one of his race ; his eyes, too, have descended in their wild, fixed beauty to the same person. As a child, I have heard that his skin was like snow, and bright ringlets covered his head. He was, I have heard, a beautiful boy. His old nurse lived, within the last two or three years, at Horsham. One of the curates there—a Mr. Du Barry—was a great admirer of my brother's poetry, and we were able, through him, to remind her of those years, when she used to come regularly every Christmas to Field Place, to receive a substantial proof that she was not to be forgotten, though her nurse-child was gone from earth, for ever.

MY DEAREST JANE,

I have just found the lines which I mentioned ; a child's effusion about some cat, which evidently *had* a story, but it must have been before I can remember. It is in Elizabeth's hand-writing, copied probably later than the composition of the lines, though the hand-writing is unformed.

It seems to be a tabby cat, for it has an indistinct, brownish-grey coat.

I have not painted it for you :

A cat in distress,
Nothing more, nor less ;
Good folks, I must faithfully tell ye,
As I am a sinner,
It waits for some dinner
To stuff out its own little belly.

You would not easily guess
All the modes of distress
Which torture the tenants of earth ;
And the various evils,
Which like so many devils,
Attend the poor souls from their birth.

Some a living require,
And others desire
An old fellow out of the way ;
And which is the best
I leave to be guessed,
For I cannot pretend to say.

One wants society,
Another variety,
Others a tranquil life ;
Some want food,
Others, as good,
Only want a wife.

But this poor little cat
Only wanted a rat,
To stuff out its own little maw :
And it were as good
Some people had such food,
To make them *hold their jaw !*

That last expression is, I imagine, still *classical* at boys' schools, and it was a favourite one of Bysshe's, which I remember from a painful fact, that one of my sisters ventured to make use of it, and was punished in some old-fashioned way, which impressed the sentence on my memory.

HELLEN.

At ten years of age Shelley was sent to Sion House, Brentford. In walking with him to Bishopsgate from London, he pointed out to me, more than once, a gloomy brick-house, as being this school. He spoke of the master, Dr. Greenlaw, not without respect, saying, ' he was a hard-headed Scotchman,

and a man of rather liberal opinions'. Of this period of his life he never gave me an account ; nor have I heard or read any details, which appeared to bear the impress of truth. How long he remained at Sion House I know not ; nor at what age he was removed to Eton. Among his papers is the commencement of an essay on Friendship, written not long before his death ; in it he has thus commemorated a youthful attachment. Whether the school was Sion House, or Eton, does not appear. His age of eleven or twelve years agrees better with the former.

FRIENDSHIP

I once had a friend, whom an inextricable multitude of circumstances has forced me to treat with apparent neglect. To him I dedicate this essay. If he finds my own words condemn me, will he not forgive ?

(Yes, he has forgiven you ! I saw this fragment, for the first time, a few months ago ; I listened to the question, as to a voice from another world, heard once more after a silence of thirty-five long years ; and I immediately answered it. I thankfully accept the dedication, and I lament that it is only of the following brief fragment :)

AN ESSAY ON FRIENDSHIP

The nature of love and friendship is very little understood, and the distinctions between them ill-established. This latter feeling—at least, a profound and sentimental attachment to one of the same sex, often precedes the former. It is not right to say, merely, that friendship is exempt from the smallest alloy of sensuality. It rejects, with disdain, all thoughts but those of an elevated and imaginative character. I remember forming an attachment of this kind at school. I cannot recall to my memory the precise epoch at which this took place ; but I imagine it must have been at the age of eleven or twelve.

The object of these sentiments was a boy about my own age, of a character eminently generous, brave and gentle ; and the elements of human feeling seemed to have been, from his birth, genially compounded within him. There was a delicacy and a simplicity in his manners, inexpressibly attractive. It has never been my fortune to meet with him since my school-boy-days ; but either I confound my present recollections with the delusions of past feelings, or he is now a source of honour and utility to every one around him. The tones of his voice

were so soft and winning, that every word pierced into my heart ; and their pathos was so deep, that in listening to him the tears have involuntarily gushed from my eyes. Such was the being for whom I first experienced the sacred sentiments of friendship. I remember in my simplicity writing to my mother a long account of his admirable qualities and my own devoted attachment. I suppose she thought me out of my wits, for she returned no answer to my letter. I remember we used to walk the whole play-hours up and down by some moss-covered palings, pouring out our hearts in youthful talk. We used to speak of the ladies, with whom we were in love, and I remember that our usual practice was to confirm each other in the everlasting fidelity, in which we had bound ourselves towards them, and towards each other. I recollect thinking my friend exquisitely beautiful. Every night, when we parted to go to bed, we kissed each other like children, as we still were !

CHAPTER II

MY DEAREST JANE,

I had no conception that Bysshe's marriage with Harriet Westbrook would have elicited the quotation in Charles G——'s letter, which proves he was sacrificing himself to a point of honour. You will perceive that C. G. had no unpleasant recollections of harsh voice, etc., which I cannot help thinking must have been noticeable only when the boy was entering manhood.

I remember well how he used to sing to us ; he could not bear any turns or twists in music, but liked a tune played quite simply.

About Miss Westbrook ; I recollect hearing Bysshe married her, because her name was Harriet. She was not a person likely to attach him permanently ; I remember her well ; a very handsome girl, with a complexion quite unknown in these days—brilliant in pink and white—with hair quite like a poet's dream, and Bysshe's peculiar admiration.

I should not remember many of her contemporaries, but the governess and teachers used to remark upon her beauty ; and once I heard them talking together of a possible Fête Champêtre, and Harriet Westbrook might enact Venus.

The engraved portraits of Bysshe, which have hitherto been published, are frightful pictures for a spiritual-looking being,

like the poet. Yet I do not expect that my ideal will ever be created, because he must have altered from boy to man. His forehead was white, the eyes deep blue,—darker than John's. He had an eccentric quantity of hair, in those days, when he came by stealth to Field Place ; and Elizabeth, on one occasion, made him sit down to have it cut, and be made to look like a Christian. His good temper was a pleasant memory always, and I do not recollect an instance of the reverse towards any of us. I tell you little things as they pass in my mind, and you had better tear them off and paste them in the book, for I find a difficulty in recalling far-off memories, when I set about it as a task, however palatable the task may be. There is no life which could bear the test of a detective, and Bysshe's faults and feelings were all laid bare by a too great moral courage, which made him witness against himself, when the rest of his fellow-men conceal their failings, and set their virtues only upon high ; for we are all erring mortals.

HELLEN.

Let us next write of the immortal dead, whilst he was at Eton. And—oh ! let us write of him with a tender sadness, as a dove would write about his lost mate ; and why may not a dove write with a pen drawn painfully from his own wing ? Of the testimonies relating to this period of his life, the first place is, for many reasons, due to that of Mrs. Shelley. Mary tells us that :

On being placed at Eton, Shelley had to undergo aggravated miseries from his systematic and determined resistance to that law of a public school, denominated fagging. It were long to discuss the merits of the question now. To show how the most obedient fags become the worst tyrants ; or how it is detrimental to the disposition, both of the elder and the younger boys : of the one, that they should capriciously command ; of the other, that they should slavishly and fearfully obey. Shelley would never obey. And this incapacity on his part was the cause of whatever persecutions might attend him, both at school and in his future life. This disposition, which is made only more impregnable the greater the force that is employed against it, is much feared and disliked among men ; and it is agreed, that such has been the characteristic of the most vicious among our species. But there is this striking distinction between the worst and the best, when they are actuated by this impulse. The bad man follows his own will, governed

by none ; the good person, whose mind is yet deeply imbued by independence, is to be led—even as an infant to the mother's breast—by affection and reason. And Shelley, from the sensibility of his nature, and the forwardness of his understanding, was peculiarly susceptible of both these modes of government. There is also another line to be drawn between the vicious and the good in these circumstances, which is, the mode in which they employ their liberty. The most rigid censor could hardly have found fault with Shelley's. His heart was set on the acquirement of knowledge, and his time was spent in that exercise. At the very time that he neglected the rules of school-attendance, he translated half of Pliny's *Natural History* into English. His money was employed, either in purposes of benevolence, or in the purchase of books, or instruments.

I do not give him as an example for children to follow. Away with this cant of schoolboy reproving. I describe, and as far as in me lies unfold the secrets of a human heart ; and, if I be true to nature, I depict an uprightness of purpose, a generosity of sentiment, and a sweetness of disposition, that yielded not to the devil of hate, but to the god of love, unequalled by any human being that ever existed. Tamed by affection, but unconquered by blows, what chance was there that Shelley should be happy at a public school ?

Affection does not enter in the head-master's code of laws ; kindness is too troublesome a mode of discipline, and fear is a short way of enchaining a multitude.

One is glad when we can bring our pretended moralists to a forced acquiescence. What is it that in spite of all his worth, still always gives an air of the ridiculous to the character of a schoolmaster ? Think you that it would be so, if his heart and soul were engaged in forming perfect human beings from the little embryos placed under his care ; or, if beloved by his pupils, studying their dispositions, imbuing them with virtue by the force of reason only ; winding them to his purpose by the resistless power of superior wisdom ? Oh, no ! look at the picture of the schoolmaster. Is it the paternal care that his countenance expresses ? the thoughtful, yet deep-felt, affection that causes his eyes to beam ? the lessons of virtue, dropping, like honey, from his tongue ? the gentle remonstrance ? the firm yet angerless resistance to the freaks of his little flock ? Are these what cause a smile of contempt ? No. Look at him. His frowning brow ; the rod uplifted in one

hand ; the book, the fatal, incomprehensible book, in the other ; the slave, that cowed, fearful, and stammering, stands before him—his cheek already tingling with the expected blow ! This is no caricature of a schoolmaster ; such is the picture universally acknowledged as his prototype, and you dare to inculcate the angelic nature of Shelley, because he bent not his back to this autocrat !

Inasmuch as a lady, however clever and well-informed, cannot attain to an accurate comprehension of the manners and morals of a public school, exaggeration and inaccuracy may be pardoned. I will not pretend to decide the great question, as to the expediency of a well-regulated system of fagging ; I have sometimes ventured to discuss it with my animated and eloquent friend ; and I must confess, that I still think that something may be said in favour of the old practice. For my own part, I learned as a fag, how to do many very useful things. To make a bed, to brush a hat and clothes ; to clean knives and forks, and plates, and shoes and boots, in particular ; to set a good polish on the last with a moderate consumption of blacking. To roast potatoes, chestnuts, and the like ; to boil an egg ; to make coffee, toast, and other good things ; to put on buttons, sew up a seam, and in one word, to make myself generally useful. This salutary exercise of humble faculties did me no sort of harm ; on the contrary, it was eminently serviceable in after-life. ' I was a dutiful fag, but I am no more a slave, Shelley, than yourself ; and from my servile submission to this so-called tyranny, it is quite certain that my aristocratical feelings took no detriment. Whilst I was still a fag, a boy at school, whom I had offended, said to me one day : " People say, as proud as Lucifer ; but I say, if Lucifer were only half as proud as you are, he would have something to be proud of ! " ' Shelley sometimes reminded me of the boy's sally, and he would add : ' How I wish I could be fastidious and exclusive as you are ; but I cannot. I fear it is not in my nature to be so ! ' But to return to Mrs. Shelley's testimonies.

While at Eton he formed several sincere friendships ; although disliked by the masters, and hated by his superiors in age, he was adored by his equals. He was all passion,—passionate in his resistance to injury, passionate in his love. Kindness could win his whole soul, and the idea of self never for a moment tarnished the purity of his sentiments.

He became intimate, also, at Eton, with a man whom he

never mentioned, except in terms of the tenderest respect. This was Dr. Lind, a name well known among the professors of medical science. 'This man', he has often said, 'is exactly what an old man ought to be. Free, calm-spirited, full of benevolence, and even of youthful ardour; his eye seemed to burn with supernatural spirit beneath his brow, shaded by his venerable white locks; he was tall, vigorous, and healthy in his body; tempered, as it had ever been, by his amiable mind: I owe to that man far, ah! far more than I owe to my father; he loved me, and I shall never forget our long talks, where he breathed the spirit of the kindest tolerance and the purest wisdom. Once, when I was very ill during the holidays, as I was recovering from a fever which had attacked my brain, a servant overheard my father consult about sending me to a private madhouse. I was a favourite among all our servants, so this fellow came and told me as I lay sick in bed. My horror was beyond words, and I might soon have been mad indeed, if they had proceeded in their iniquitous plan. I had one hope. I was master of three pounds in money, and, with the servant's help, I contrived to send an express to Dr. Lind. He came, and I shall never forget his manner on that occasion. His profession gave him authority; his love for me ardour. He dared my father to execute his purpose, and his menaces had the desired effect.'

I relate this in my Shelley's words, for I well remember them. I well remember where they were spoken; it was that night that decided my destiny; when he opened at first with the confidence of friendship, and then with the ardour of love, his whole heart to me.

Of Dr. Lind more will be told hereafter. I have heard Shelley speak of his fever and this scene at Field Place more than once, in nearly the same terms as Mrs. Shelley adopts. It appeared to myself, and to others also, that his recollections were those of a person not quite recovered from a fever, which had attacked his brain, and still disturbed by the horrors of the disease. Truth and justice demand that no event of his life should be kept back, but that all the materials for the formation of a correct judgment should be freely given.

Amongst his other self-sought studies, he was passionately attached to the study of what used to be called the occult sciences, conjointly with that of the new wonders, which chemistry and natural philosophy have displayed to us. His pocket-money was spent in the purchase of books relative to

these darling pursuits—of chemical apparatus and materials. The books consisted of treatises on magic and witchcraft, as well as those more modern ones detailing the miracles of electricity and galvanism. Sometimes he watched the live-long nights for ghosts. At his father's house, where his influence was, of course, great among the dependants, he even planned how he might get admission to the vault, or charnel-house, at Warnham Church, and might sit there all night, harrowed by fear, yet trembling with expectation, to see one of the spiritualized owners of the bones piled around him. He consulted his books, how to raise a ghost ; and once, at midnight—he was then at Eton—he stole from his Dame's house, and quitting the town, crossed the fields towards a running stream. As he walked along the pathway amidst the long grass, he heard it rustle behind him ; he dared not look back ; he felt convinced that the devil followed him ; he walked fast, and held tight the skull, the prescribed assistant of his incantations.

When he had crossed the field he felt less fearful, for the grass no longer rustled, so the devil no longer followed him. He came to some of the many beautiful clear streams near Eton, and sought for one which he could bestride Colossus-like¹ ; then, standing thus, he repeated his charm, and drank thrice from the skull. No ghost appeared, but for the credit of glamour-books, he did not doubt that the incantation failed from some mistake of his own. It was useless to repeat it that night. Very probably the human skull was wanting, a tumbler, or mug supplying its place, but inadequately, and therefore the youthful enchanter was baffled.

It is sometimes in my power to illustrate the life of Shelley by parallel passages drawn from my own. I passed three or four years at a preparatory school in Yorkshire, near Ferry-bridge, where boys remained until they were eleven or twelve years old. I have a lively recollection of several remarkable events that occurred whilst I was there. Among others, of the Peace of Amiens. The treaty was signed on the 27th of March, 1802, and soon afterwards the joyful intelligence reached us. It was one Sunday morning, and, in token of rejoicing, plum-puddings were forthwith ordered for our dinner. When these were placed upon the table at one o'clock

¹ No devil, ghost, or spirit, can cross running water (this superstition may have some reference to the rite of baptism) ; it is prudent, therefore, in all dealings with demons, to have a running stream at hand.

—for, according to the old fashion, we used to begin the meal with pudding—our master looked upon them complacently, and, standing up, delivered a special grace, which I never heard before or since : ‘ Peace be within her walls, and plenteousness within her palaces ! ’ After dinner we went to church a second time, as usual ; and, as usual, we heard a second very long sermon, but on this occasion our master discoursed at length of the great and manifold blessings of peace.

My next recollection has more relation to the sorceries at Eton and Warnham. In the same village was another and a larger school, containing bigger boys. We had a common playground, to which we repaired on half-holidays ; at other times we must be content with the run of several large gardens. This school was only what is called a commercial academy ; ours was a classical school. We were accounted young gentlemen, and were so styled, being intended for the learned professions, or being the heirs to landed estates. Our superior station compensated for the more advanced age of the boys, as they were called, of the larger school, and therefore we were perfectly equal, and always agreed very well, being the best friends in the world. The common play-ground was a pleasant grass field of eight or ten acres, watered by several pure streams. One half-holiday, in the summer, I started off for the playground the moment dinner was over ; I took the shortest way to it, as I was wont, across a garden. The garden was separated from the field by a sunk fence ; there was a low wall, and a stream of very clear water flowed along the sunk fence at the foot of the wall. A boy, standing in the field, stopped me, as I was about to take my accustomed leap over the sunk fence.

‘ Stay where you are, stay where you are ; you must not come into the play-ground ! ’

‘ Why not ? ’

‘ Because they are going to raise the devil ; and he cannot hurt you so long as there is a stream of running water between you and him.’

‘ But he will get you when he comes.’

‘ No he will not ; for the moment they have fairly raised him, I shall clamber over to you, and then I shall be safe too.’

He explained how this feat of incantation was to be effected ; and I saw several of the bigger boys standing together. They were within a magic circle, into which the devil, it was said, could not enter ; and a circle was marked out on the ground. The chief magician was a boy twenty years of age—a full-

grown man, indeed. He was a negro, or so nearly one, that I could not have distinguished him from a real negro ; and, as such, he was believed to understand perfectly Oby, Fetiches, Taboo, in a word, the whole of the Black Art. A black hat was placed on the ground a short distance without the circle ; the Lord's Prayer was to be read thrice backwards, and the black necromancer was to perform other rites, which I do not remember. When these had been duly completed, the devil was to appear under the hat ; first, as a crooked black pin. When the hat was lifted up, the pin would turn into a black cat. This, after a while, would become a shaggy black dog ; the dog would frisk about a long time, running round and round, and trying often, but in vain, to get within the magic circle. The black dog would slowly grow into a huge black bull, exceedingly fierce, terrible, and dangerous, and with eyes of fire ; and finally, the devil would assume his own shape, whatever this may be. The operations of the African magician seemed to advance but slowly—not at all, indeed. The boys within the circle kept on consulting together. I could not hear their consultations, but they lasted a very long time ; and, as far as I could perceive, nothing more was done. At last the negro pulled out his watch—a large silver hunting-watch—and looking at it, said aloud : ' In a few minutes we shall have to go in to tea ',—' drinkings ', this meal is called in that part of the county of York— ' it will be of no use, lads, raising him to-night ! ' The rest assented, and here the ceremonies ended.

The boy who stood on the other side of the sunk fence, talking to me all this tedious time, appeared to be alarmed and uneasy : he belonged to the commercial academy.

' It is a great shame raising him ! What can they want with him ? What is the use of it ? What good is he to do ? How will they get him laid again ? I have a great mind to go and tell our master, that he may come and prevent it.'

' Will it not be time enough to go and tell, when they have raised him ? '

' No ; it will be too late then. I do not suppose the master can do more then, than anybody else. I rather fancy the devil will not mind him a bit.'

For my part, I was rather surprised than frightened. I stood still on the wall, because I had been given to understand, that I should certainly be licked, if I entered the play-ground, it being evidently a measure of precaution to keep us out of

it ; for if the devil, after he was raised, should carry off one of the young gentlemen, the commercial boys would get into great trouble. I had read *Paradise Lost* at that time, not regularly through, but yet almost the whole of it. Jacob Tonson's edition of Milton's poems used always to lie on the table at home, with Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, *Tristram Shandy*, and some other standard works, in a room where I often sat. Tonson's Milton was a nice book for a boy, for it had plates, in which the devils were represented with handsome long tails. These sporting figures tempted me to read the book, a bit here and a bit there. I understood little of what I read, but I was fully convinced, that I understood enough of the nature of devils to feel quite confident, that such grand, pompous, consequential fellows as they plainly were, would never leave Pandemonium and come up in our common play-ground, merely to gratify the grinning negro and his commercial companions. I often overheard them afterwards consulting about raising the devil ; but the consultation invariably terminated by a reference to the large silver hunting-watch, and a farther adjournment. If, then, the blackamoor ever actually raised the devil, it must have been on some occasion when I was not present.

This was the whole of my experience in the Art Magic, and it is not much ; but when I told the tale, such as it is, to Shelley, he listened to it with earnest and eager delight. ' Yes, the blacks really understand magic, and often practise it with success. Africa is a most wonderful country ! I will see it some day—I will visit it some day—that is certain ! ' He seemed greatly to desire to know our negro, esteeming him, doubtless, as a most valuable acquaintance, and wishing, probably, to write to him and to make him his friend.

The Quarterly Reviewer, telling a story, partly true and partly false, of his destroying some old trees at Eton with a burning-glass, remarks, that you might foresee the future opponent of superstition and tyranny in the author of this exploit. There is great truth in this observation ; and to those acquainted with the early circumstances of Shelley's life, the remark bears still greater force. From his earliest years, all his amusements and occupations were of a daring, and, in one sense of the term, lawless nature. He delighted to exert his powers, not as a boy, but as a man ; and so, with manly powers and childish wit, he dared and achieved attempts that none of his comrades could even have conceived. His

understanding and the early development of imagination never permitted him to mingle in childish plays ; and his natural aversion from tyranny prevented him from paying due attention to his school duties. But he was always actively employed ; and although his endeavours were prosecuted with puerile precipitancy, yet his aim and thoughts were constantly directed to those great objects, which have employed the thoughts of the greatest among men ; and though his studies were not followed up according to school discipline, they were not the less diligently applied to.

Enjoying more liberty at Field Place than he possibly could at Eton, that was the chief scene of his experiments. He there possessed an electrical machine, he contrived a galvanic battery, and amused himself by experiments, which might well excite delight and wonder in so ardent a mind.

Here, I regret to say, the brief fragments of biography written by Mrs. Shelley terminate.

To set a large tree on fire by means of an ordinary burning glass seems to be impossible ; and the distance at which this achievement was reported to have been performed made the tale altogether incredible. For some time, therefore, I considered it as fabulous. I have since been informed by Eton men, that an old tree was actually set on fire, but that the fire was caused by gunpowder, and that the gunpowder was ignited by a lens. If a small quantity of gunpowder were placed in the hollow of an old tree, when it exploded it would doubtless set the dry rotten wood alight ; a train might easily be laid from the mine to a distant point, where, with a common burning-glass, the train might be kindled and the mine sprung. This piece of boyish mischief Shelley, they assured me, really executed. It was a very trifling affair, but the fire and explosion were of sufficient magnitude greatly to terrify the timid old gentlewoman, who then presided over the school, and against whose nerves the flaming attack was aimed.

Had the Reviewer, being present on the spot, exclaimed, at the moment the boy's squib burst, ' Here is the future opponent of superstition and tyranny ; we plainly see him in the author of this exploit, and by the light of his own powder ! ' he would have gained much credit for his acumen : and had the ingenious critic added : ' These are no common crackers, surely ; they are the crackers of a divine poet ! ' it is evident that he would seem to have attained to something

of prophetic vein, and might well have passed, not only in Albemarle Street, but wherever the *Quarterly Review* circulates, for a wise man—a soothsayer.

Shelley had several attached friends at Eton ; I will insert the kind testimonial of one of them, because it is equally creditable to both the friends :

GLENTHORNE, *February 27th, 1857.*

MY DEAR MADAM,

Your letter has taken me back to the sunny time of boyhood, 'when thought is speech, and speech is truth' ; when I was the friend and companion of Shelley at Eton. What brought us together in that small world was, I suppose, kindred feelings, and the predominance of fancy and imagination. Many a long and happy walk have I had with him in the beautiful neighbourhood of dear old Eton. We used to wander for hours about Clewer, Frogmore, the Park at Windsor, the Terrace ; and I was a delighted and willing listener to his marvellous stories of fairy-land, and apparitions, and spirits, and haunted ground ; and his speculations were then (for his mind was far more developed than mine) of the world beyond the grave. Another of his favourite rambles was Stoke Park, and the picturesque churchyard where Gray is said to have written his *Elegy*, of which he was very fond. I was myself far too young to form any estimate of character, but I loved Shelley for his kindness and affectionate ways : he was not made to endure the rough and boisterous pastime at Eton, and his shy and gentle nature was glad to escape far away to muse over strange fancies, for his mind was reflective and teeming with deep thought. His lessons were child's play to him, and his power of Latin versification marvellous. I think I remember some long work he had even then commenced, but I never saw it. His love of nature was intense, and the sparkling poetry of his mind shone out of his speaking eye, when he was dwelling on anything good or great. He certainly was not happy at Eton, for his was a disposition that needed especial personal superintendence, to watch, and cherish, and direct all his noble aspirations, and the remarkable tenderness of his heart. He had great moral courage, and feared nothing, but what was base, and false, and low. He never joined in the usual sports of the boys, and, what is remarkable, never went out in a boat on the river. What I have here set down will be of little use to you, but will please

you as a sincere, and truthful, and humble tribute to one whose good name was sadly whispered away. Shelley said to me, when leaving Oxford under a cloud : ' Halliday, I am come to say good-bye to you, if you are not afraid to be seen with me ! ' I saw him once again in the autumn of 1814, in London, when he was glad to introduce me to his wife. I think he said, he was just come from Ireland. You have done quite right in applying to me direct, and I am only sorry that I have no anecdotes, or letters, of that period to furnish.

I am yours truly,

WALTER S. HALLIDAY.

Dr. Keate, the head-master of Eton school, was a short, short-necked, short-legged man ; thick-set, powerful, and very active. His countenance resembled that of a bull-dog ; the expression was not less sweet and bewitching ; his eyes, his nose, and especially his mouth were exactly like that comely and engaging animal ; and so were his short, crooked legs. It was said in the school, that old Keate could pin and hold a bull with his teeth. His iron sway was the more unpleasant and shocking, after the long, mild, Saturnian reign of Dr. Goodall, whose temper, character, and conduct corresponded precisely with his name, and under whom Keate had been master of the lower school. Discipline, wholesome and necessary in moderation, was carried by him to an excess ; it is reported, that on one morning he flogged eighty boys. Although he was rigid, coarse, and despotic, some affirm that, on the whole, he was not unjust, nor altogether devoid of kindness. His behaviour was accounted vulgar and ungentlemanlike, and therefore he was peculiarly odious to the gentlemen of the school, especially to the refined and aristocratical Shelley. Being universally unpopular, to torment him was excusable, legitimate, and even commendable. In school, the head-master sate enthroned in a spacious elevated desk, enclosed on all sides, like a pew, with two doors, one on each side. These the boys one morning screwed fast. The Doctor entered the school at eleven o'clock, advanced to his desk, tried to open one door, and found it was fastened. He went round, grinning, growling, and snarling, to the other side ; the door there had been secured also. Then turning furiously to the boys, he said :

' You think to keep me out, eh ! You think I cannot get in here, eh ! But I will soon show you the difference, eh ! '

The desk was as high as the breast of an ordinary man, and as high as the little Doctor's head, but laying his hand on it, he lightly vaulted in. The season was summer ; in school old Keate wore a long gown and cassock, and in warm weather, it seemed, nothing under them ; for, in his leap, the learned and reverend Doctor displayed not only his agility, but his naked stern, all lower integuments being wanting. The unwonted spectacle was saluted with loud cheers, and a hearty laugh. The mutinous explosion inflamed his wrath to the utmost.

' You shall pay for this, eh ! I will make some of you suffer for it, eh ! '

However, nothing came of it ; the enraged and insulted pedagogue could not discover the offenders. The screws had been bought by two boys, a tall boy and a short one. That was all the detectives could find out.

CHAPTER III

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY AT OXFORD

WHAT is the greatest disappointment in life ? The question has often been asked. In a perfect life, that is to say, in a long course of various disappointments, when the collector has completed the entire set and series, which should he pronounce to be the greatest ? What is the greatest disappointment of all ? The question has often been asked, and it has received very different answers. Some have said matrimony ; others, the accession of an inheritance that had long been anxiously anticipated ; others, the attainment of honours ; others, the deliverance from an ancient and intolerable nuisance, since a new and more grievous one speedily succeeded to the old. Many solutions have been proposed, and each has been ingeniously supported. At a very early age I had formed a splendid picture of the glories of our two Universities. My father took pleasure in describing his academical career. I listened to him with great delight, and many circumstances gave additional force to these first impressions. The clergy—and in the country they make one's principal guests—always spoke of these establishments with deep reverence, and of their academical days as the happiest of their lives. When I went to

school, my prejudices were strengthened ; for the master noticed all deficiencies in learning as being unfit, and every remarkable proficiency as being fit, for the University ;—such expressions marked the utmost limits of blame and of praise. Whenever any of the elder boys were translated to college—and several went thither from our school every year—the transmission was accompanied with a certain awe. I had always contemplated my own removal with the like feeling ; and as the period approached, I anticipated it with a reverent impatience. The appointed day at last arrived, and I set out with a school-fellow, about to enter the same career, and his father. The latter was a dutiful and a most grateful son of *alma mater* ; and the conversation of this estimable man, during our long journey, fanned the flame of my young ardour. Such, indeed, had been the effect of his discourse for many years ; and as he possessed a complete collection of the Oxford Almanacks, and it had been a great and a frequent gratification to contemplate the engravings at the top of the annual sheets, when I visited his quiet vicarage, I was already familiar with the aspect of the noble buildings that adorn that famous city. After travelling for several days, we reached the last stage, and soon afterwards approached the point, whence, I was told, we might discern the first glimpse of the metropolis of learning. I strained my eyes to catch a view of that land of promise, for which I had so eagerly longed. The summits of towers, and spires, and domes appeared afar, and faintly ; ther. the prospect was obstructed ; by degrees it opened upon us again, and we saw the tall trees that shaded the colleges. At three o'clock on a fine autumnal afternoon we entered the streets of Oxford. Although the weather was cold, we had let down all the windows of our post-chaise, and I sat forward, devouring every object with greedy eyes. Members of the University, of different ages and ranks, were gliding through the quiet streets of the venerable city in academic costume. We devoted two or three days to the careful examination of the various objects of interest that Oxford contains. The eye was gratified ; for the external appearance of the University even surpassed the bright picture which my youthful imagination had painted. The outside was always admirable : it was far otherwise with the inside. It is essential to the greatness of a disappointment, that the previous expectation should have been great : nothing could exceed my young anticipations,—nothing could be more complete than their

overthrow. It would be impossible to describe my feelings without speaking harshly and irreverently of the venerable University. On this subject, then, I will only confess my disappointment, and discreetly be silent as to its causes. Whatever those causes, I grew, at least, and I own it cheerfully, soon pleased with Oxford, on the whole ; pleased with the beauty of the city, and its gentle river, and the pleasantness of the surrounding country.

Although no great facilities were afforded to the student, there were the same opportunities of *solitary* study as in other places. All the irksome restraints of school were removed, and those of the University are few and trifling. Our fare was good, although not so good, perhaps, as it ought to have been, in return for the enormous cost ; and I liked the few companions with whom I most commonly mixed. I continued to lead a life of tranquil, studious, and somewhat melancholy contentment, until the long vacation, which I spent with my family, and, when it expired, I returned to the University.

At the commencement of Michaelmas term, that is, at the end of October, in the year 1810, I happened one day to sit next to a freshman at dinner : it was his first appearance in hall. His figure was slight, and his aspect remarkably youthful, even at our table, where all were very young. He seemed thoughtful and absent. He ate little, and had no acquaintance with any one. I know not how it was that we fell into conversation, for such familiarity was unusual, and, strange to say, much reserve prevailed in a society where there could not possibly be occasion for any. We have often endeavoured in vain to recollect in what manner our discourse began, and especially by what transition it passed to a subject sufficiently remote from all the associations we were able to trace. The stranger had expressed an enthusiastic admiration for poetical and imaginative works of the German school. I dissented from his criticisms. He upheld the originality of the German writings. I asserted their want of nature.

'What modern literature', said he, 'will you compare to theirs ?'

I named the Italian. This roused all his impetuosity ; and few, as I soon discovered, were more impetuous in argumentative conversation. So eager was our dispute, that when the servants came to clear the tables, we were not aware that we had been left alone. I remarked, that it was time to quit the hall, and I invited the stranger to finish the discussion at

my rooms. He eagerly assented. He lost the thread of his discourse in the transit, and the whole of his enthusiasm in the cause of Germany ; for as soon as he arrived at my rooms, and whilst I was lighting the candles, he said calmly, and to my great surprise, that he was not qualified to maintain such a discussion, for he was alike ignorant of Italian and German, and had only read the works of the Germans in translations, and but little of Italian poetry, even at second hand. For my part, I confessed, with an equal ingenuousness, that I knew nothing of German, and but little of Italian ; that I had spoken only through others, and like him, had hitherto seen by the glimmering light of translations.

It is upon such scanty data that young men reason ; upon such slender materials do they build up their opinions. It may be urged, however, that if they did not discourse freely with each other upon insufficient information—for such alone can be acquired in the pleasant morning of life, and until they educate themselves—they would be constrained to observe a perpetual silence, and to forgo the numerous advantages that flow from frequent and liberal discussion.

I inquired of the vivacious stranger, as we sat over our wine and dessert, how long he had been at Oxford, how he liked it ? He answered my questions with a certain impatience, and, resuming the subject of our discussion, he remarked that, ' Whether the literature of Germany, or of Italy, be the more original, or in a purer and more accurate taste, is of little importance, for polite letters are but vain trifling ; the study of languages, not only of the modern tongues, but of Latin and Greek also, is merely the study of words and phrases, of the names of things ; it matters not how they are called ; it is surely far better to investigate things themselves '. I inquired, a little bewildered, how this was to be effected ? He answered, ' through the physical sciences, and especially through chemistry ; ' and raising his voice, his face flushing as he spoke, he discoursed with a degree of animation, that far outshone his zeal in defence of the Germans of chemistry and chemical analysis. Concerning that science, then so popular, I had merely a scanty and vulgar knowledge, gathered from elementary books, and the ordinary experiments of popular lecturers. I listened, therefore, in silence to his eloquent disquisition, interposing a few brief questions only, and at long intervals, as to the extent of his own studies and manipulations. As I felt, in truth, but a slight interest in the subject of his conversation,

I had leisure to examine, and I may add, to admire, the appearance of my very extraordinary guest. It was a sum of many contradictions. His figure was slight and fragile, and yet his bones and joints were large and strong. He was tall, but he stooped so much, that he seemed of a low stature. His clothes were expensive, and made according to the most approved mode of the day ; but they were tumbled, rumpled, unbrushed. His gestures were abrupt, and sometimes violent, occasionally even awkward, yet more frequently gentle and graceful. His complexion was delicate, and almost feminine, of the purest red and white ; yet he was tanned and freckled by exposure to the sun, having passed the autumn, as he said, in shooting. His features, his whole face, and particularly his head, were, in fact, unusually small ; yet the last *appeared* of a remarkable bulk, for his hair was long and bushy, and in fits of absence, and in the agonies (if I may use the word) of anxious thought, he often rubbed it fiercely with his hands, or passed his fingers quickly through his locks unconsciously, so that it was singularly wild and rough. In times when it was the mode to imitate stage-coachmen as closely as possible in costume, and when the hair was invariably cropped, like that of our soldiers, this eccentricity was very striking. His features were not symmetrical (the mouth, perhaps, excepted), yet was the effect of the whole extremely powerful. They breathed an animation, a fire, an enthusiasm, a vivid and preternatural intelligence, that I never met with in any other countenance. Nor was the moral expression less beautiful than the intellectual ; for there was a softness, a delicacy, a gentleness, and especially (though this will surprise many) that air of profound religious veneration, that characterises the best works, and chiefly the frescoes (and into these they infused their whole souls), of the great masters of Florence and of Rome. I recognized the very peculiar expression in these wonderful productions long afterwards, and with a satisfaction mingled with much sorrow, for it was after the decease of him in whose countenance I had first observed it. I admired the enthusiasm of my new acquaintance, his ardour in the cause of science, and his thirst for knowledge. I seemed to have found in him all those intellectual qualities which I had vainly expected to meet with in an University. But there was one physical blemish that threatened to neutralize all his excellence. ' This is a fine, clever fellow ! ' I said to myself, ' but I can never bear his society ; I shall never be able to endure his voice ; it

would kill me. What a pity it is ! ' I am very sensible of imperfections, and especially of painful sounds—and the voice of the stranger was excruciating : it was intolerably shrill, harsh, and discordant ; of the most cruel intension—it was perpetual, and without any remission—it excoriated the ears. He continued to discourse of chemistry, sometimes sitting, sometimes standing before the fire, and sometimes pacing about the room ; and when one of the innumerable clocks that speak in various notes during the day and the night at Oxford, proclaimed a quarter to seven, he said suddenly that he must go to a lecture on mineralogy, and declared enthusiastically that he expected to derive much pleasure and instruction from it. I am ashamed to own that the cruel voice made me hesitate for a moment ; but it was impossible to omit so indispensable a civility—I invited him to return to tea ; he gladly assented, promised that he would not be absent long, snatched his cap, hurried out of the room, and I heard his footsteps, as he ran through the silent quadrangle, and afterwards along High-street.

An hour soon elapsed, whilst the table was cleared, and the tea was made, and I again heard the footsteps of one running quickly. My guest suddenly burst into the room, threw down his cap, and as he stood shivering and chafing his hands over the fire, he declared how much he had been disappointed in the lecture. Few persons attended ; it was dull and languid, and he was resolved never to go to another. ' I went away, indeed ', he added, with an arch look, and in a shrill whisper, coming close to me as he spoke,—' I went away, indeed, before the lecture was finished. I stole away ; for it was so stupid, and I was so cold, that my teeth chattered. The Professor saw me, and appeared to be displeased. I thought I could have got out without being observed ; but I struck my knee against a bench, and made a noise, and he looked at me. I am determined that he shall never see me again.'

' What did the man talk about ? '

' About stones ! about stones ! ' he answered, with a down-cast look and in a melancholy tone, as if about to say something excessively profound. ' About stones !—stones, stones, stones !—nothing but stones !—and so drily. It was wonderfully tiresome—and stones are not interesting things in themselves ! '

We took tea, and soon afterwards had supper, as was usual. He discoursed after supper with as much warmth as before

of the wonders of chemistry ; of the encouragement that Napoleon afforded to that most important science ; of the French chemists and their glorious discoveries ; and of the happiness of visiting Paris, and sharing in their fame and their experiments. The voice, however, seemed to me more cruel than ever. He spoke likewise of his own labours and of his apparatus, and starting up suddenly after supper, he proposed that I should go instantly with him to see the galvanic trough. I looked at my watch, and observed that it was too late ; that the fire would be out, and the night was cold. He resumed his seat, saying that I might come on the morrow, early, to breakfast, immediately after chapel. He continued to declaim in his rapturous strain, asserting that chemistry was, in truth, the only science that deserved to be studied. I suggested doubts. I ventured to question the pre-eminence of the science, and even to hesitate in admitting its utility. He described in glowing language some discoveries that had lately been made ; but the enthusiastic chemist candidly allowed that they were rather brilliant than useful, asserting, however, that they would soon be applied to purposes of solid advantage.

‘ Is not the time of by far the larger proportion of the human species ’, he inquired, with his fervid manner and in his piercing tones, ‘ wholly consumed in severe labour ? And is not this devotion of our race—of the whole of our race, I may say (for those who, like ourselves, are indulged with an exemption from the hard lot are so few, in comparison with the rest, that they scarcely deserve to be taken into the account)—absolutely necessary to procure subsistence ; so that men have no leisure for recreation or the high improvement of the mind ? Yet this incessant toil is still inadequate to procure an abundant supply of the common necessities of life : some are doomed actually to want them, and many are compelled to be content with an insufficient provision. We know little of the peculiar nature of those substances which are proper for the nourishment of animals ; we are ignorant of the qualities that make them fit for this end. Analysis has advanced so rapidly of late that we may confidently anticipate that we shall soon discover wherein their aptitude really consists ; having ascertained the cause, we shall next be able to command it, and to produce at our pleasure the desired effects. It is easy, even in our present state of ignorance, to reduce our ordinary food to carbon, or to lime ; a moderate advancement in chemical science will speedily enable us, we may hope, to

create, with equal facility, food from substances that appear at present to be as ill adapted to sustain us. What is the cause of the remarkable fertility of some lands, and of the hopeless sterility of others ? A spadeful of the most productive soil, does not to the eye differ much from the same quantity taken from the most barren. The real difference is probably very slight ; by chemical agency the philosopher may work a total change, and may transmute an unfruitful region into a land of exuberant plenty. Water, like the atmospheric air, is compounded of certain gases : in the progress of scientific discovery a simple and sure method of manufacturing the useful fluid, in every situation and in any quantity, may be detected ; the arid deserts of Africa may then be refreshed by a copious supply, and may be transformed at once into rich meadows, and vast fields of maize and rice. The generation of heat is a mystery, but enough of the theory of caloric has already been developed to induce us to acquiesce in the notion that it will hereafter, and perhaps at no very distant period, be possible to produce heat at will, and to warm the most ungenial climates as readily as we now raise the temperature of our apartments to whatever degree we may deem agreeable or salutary. If, however, it be too much to anticipate that we shall ever become sufficiently skilful to command such a prodigious supply of heat, we may expect, without the fear of disappointment, soon to understand its nature and the causes of combustion, so far at least as to provide ourselves cheaply with a fund of heat that will supersede our costly and inconvenient fuel, and will suffice to warm our habitations, for culinary purposes and for the various demands of the mechanical arts. We could not determine, without actual experiment, whether an unknown substance were combustible ; when we shall have thoroughly investigated the properties of fire, it may be that we shall be qualified to communicate to clay, to stones, and to water itself, a chemical recomposition that will render them as inflammable as wood, coals, and oil, for the difference of structure is minute and invisible, and the power of feeding flame may perhaps be easily added to any substance, or taken away from it. What a comfort would it be to the poor at all times, and especially at this season, if we were capable of solving this problem alone, if we could furnish them with a competent supply of heat ! These speculations may appear wild, and it may seem improbable that they will ever be realised, to persons who have not extended

their views of what is practicable by closely watching science in its course onward ; but there are many mysterious powers, many irresistible agents, with the existence and with some of the phenomena of which all are acquainted. What a mighty instrument would electricity be in the hands of him who knew how to wield it, in what manner to direct its omnipotent energies ; and we may command an indefinite quantity of the fluid : by means of electrical kites we may draw down the lightning from heaven ! What a terrible organ would the supernal shock prove, if we were able to guide it ; how many of the secrets of nature would such a stupendous force unlock ! The galvanic battery is a new engine ; it has been used hitherto to an insignificant extent, yet has it wrought wonders already ; what will not an extraordinary combination of troughs, of colossal magnitude, a well-arranged system of hundreds of metallic plates, effect ? The balloon has not yet received the perfection of which it is surely capable ; the art of navigating the air is in its first and most helpless infancy ; the aerial mariner still swims on bladders, and has not mounted even the rude raft : if we weigh this invention, curious as it is, with some of the subjects I have mentioned, it will seem trifling, no doubt—a mere toy, a feather, in comparison with the splendid anticipations of the philosophical chemist ; yet it ought not altogether to be contemned. It promises prodigious facilities for locomotion, and will enable us to traverse vast tracts with ease and rapidity, and to explore unknown countries without difficulty. Why are we still so ignorant of the interior of Africa ?—why do we not despatch intrepid aeronauts to cross it in every direction, and to survey the whole peninsula in a few weeks ? The shadow of the first balloon, which a vertical sun would project precisely underneath it, as it glided silently over that hitherto unhappy country, would virtually emancipate every slave, and would annihilate slavery for ever.'

With such fervour did the slender, beardless stranger speculate concerning the march of physical science : his speculations were as wild as the experience of twenty-one years has shown them to be ; but the zealous earnestness for the augmentation of knowledge, and the glowing philanthropy and boundless benevolence that marked them, and beamed forth in the whole deportment of that extraordinary boy, are not less astonishing than they would have been if the whole of his glorious anticipations had been prophetic ; for these high

qualities at least, I have never found a parallel. When he had ceased to predict the coming honours of chemistry, and to promise the rich harvest of benefits it was soon to yield, I suggested that, although its results were splendid, yet for those who could not hope to make discoveries themselves, it did not afford so valuable a course of mental discipline as the moral sciences ; moreover, that if chemists asserted that their science alone deserved to be cultivated, the mathematicians made the same assertion, and with equal confidence, respecting their studies ; but that I was not sufficiently advanced myself in mathematics to be able to judge how far it was well founded. He declared that he knew nothing of mathematics, and treated the notion of their paramount importance with contempt.

‘What do you say of metaphysics ?’ I continued ; ‘is that science, too, the study of words only ?’

‘Ay, metaphysics’, he said, in a solemn tone, and with a mysterious air, ‘that is a noble study indeed ! If it were possible to make any discoveries there, they would be more valuable than anything the chemists have done, or could do ; they would disclose the analysis of mind, and not of mere matter !’ Then rising from his chair, he paced slowly about the room, with prodigious strides, and discoursed of souls with still greater animation and vehemence than he had displayed in treating of gases—of a future state—and especially of a former state—of pre-existence, obscured for a time through the suspension of consciousness—of personal identity, and also of ethical philosophy, in a deep and earnest tone of elevated morality, until he suddenly remarked that the fire was nearly out, and the candles were glimmering in their sockets, when he hastily apologized for remaining so long. I promised to visit the chemist in his laboratory, the alchemist in his study, the wizard in his cave, not at breakfast on that day, for it was already one, but in twelve hours—one hour after noon—and to hear some of the secrets of nature ; and for that purpose, he told me his name, and described the situation of his rooms.

I lighted him downstairs as well as I could with the stump of a candle which had dissolved itself into a lamp, and I soon heard him running through the quiet quadrangle in the still night. That sound became afterwards so familiar to my ear, that I still seem to hear Shelley’s hasty steps.

I trust, or I should perhaps rather say, I hope, that I was as much struck by the conversation, the aspect, and the

deportment of my new acquaintance, as entirely convinced of the value of the acquisition I had just made, and as deeply impressed with surprise and admiration, as became a young student not insensible of excellence, to whom a character so extraordinary, and indeed almost preternatural, had been suddenly unfolded. During his animated and eloquent discourses I felt a due reverence for his zeal and talent, but the human mind is capable of a certain amount of attention only. I had listened and discussed for seven or eight hours, and my spirits were totally exhausted ; I went to bed as soon as Shelley had quitted my rooms, and fell instantly into a profound sleep ; and I shook off with a painful effort, at the accustomed signal, the complete oblivion which then appeared to have been but momentary. Many of the wholesome usages of antiquity had ceased at Oxford ; that of early rising, however, still lingered.

As soon as I got up, I applied myself sedulously to my academical duties and my accustomed studies. The power of habitual occupation is great and engrossing, and it is possible that my mind had not yet fully recovered from the agreeable fatigue of the preceding evening, for I had entirely forgotten my engagement, nor did the thought of my young guest once cross my fancy. It was strange that a person so remarkable and attractive should have thus disappeared for several hours from my memory ; but such in truth was the fact, although I am unable to account for it in a satisfactory manner.

At one o'clock I put away my books and papers, and prepared myself for my daily walk ; the weather was frosty, with fog, and whilst I lingered over the fire with that reluctance to venture forth into the cold air, common to those who have chilled themselves by protracted sedentary pursuits, the recollection of the scenes of yesterday flashed suddenly and vividly across my mind, and I quickly repaired to a spot that I may perhaps venture to predict many of our posterity will hereafter reverently visit, to the rooms in the corner next the hall of the principal quadrangle of University College ; they are on the first floor, and on the right of the entrance, but by reason of the turn in the stairs, when you reach them, they will be upon your left hand. I remember the direction given at parting, and I soon found the door : it stood ajar. I tapped gently, and the discordant voice cried shrilly—

'Come in !'

It was now nearly two. I began to apologize for my delay, but I was interrupted by a loud exclamation of surprise—

‘What ! is it one ? I had no notion it was so late ; I thought it was about ten or eleven.’

‘It is on the stroke of two, sir’, said the scout, who was engaged in the vain attempt of setting the apartment in order.

‘Of two !’ Shelley cried, with increased wonder, and presently the clock struck, and the servant noticed it, retired, and shut the door.

I perceived at once that the young chemist took no note of time. He measured duration, not by minutes and hours, like watchmakers and their customers, but by the successive trains of ideas and sensations ; consequently, if there was a virtue of which he was utterly incapable, it was that homely, but pleasing and useful one, punctuality. He could not tear himself from his incessant abstractions to observe at intervals the growth and decline of the day ; nor was he ever able to set apart even a small portion of his mental powers for a duty so simple as that of watching the course of the pointers on the dial.

I found him cowering over the fire, his chair planted in the middle of the rug, and his feet resting upon the fender ; his whole appearance was dejected. His astonishment at the unexpected lapse of time roused him : as soon as the hour of the day was ascertained, he welcomed me, and seizing one of my arms with both his hands, he shook it with some force, and very cordially expressed his satisfaction at my visit. Then resuming his seat and his former posture, he gazed fixedly at the fire, and his limbs trembled and his teeth chattered with cold. I cleared the fire-place with the poker and stirred the fire, and when it blazed up, he drew back, and looking askance towards the door, he exclaimed with a deep sigh,

‘Thank God, that fellow is gone at last !’

The assiduity of the scout had annoyed him, and he presently added

‘If you had not come, he would have stayed until he had put everything in my rooms into some place where I should never have found it again !’

He then complained of his health, and said that he was very unwell ; but he did not appear to be affected by any disorder more serious than a slight aguish cold. I remarked the same contradiction in his rooms which I had already observed in his person and dress ; they had just been papered and painted ;

the carpet, curtains, and furniture were quite new, and had not passed through several academical generations, after the established custom of transferring the whole of the movables to the successor on payment of thirds, that is, of two-thirds of the price last given. The general air of freshness was greatly obscured, however, by the indescribable confusion in which the various objects were mixed ; notwithstanding the unwelcome exertions of the officious scout, scarcely a single article was in its proper position.

Books, boots, papers, shoes, philosophical instruments, clothes, pistols, linen, crockery, ammunition, and phials innumerable, with money, stockings, prints, crucibles, bags and boxes, were scattered on the floor and in every place ; as if the young chemist, in order to analyse the mystery of creation, had endeavoured first to re-construct the primeval chaos. The tables, and especially the carpet, were already stained with large spots of various hues, which frequently proclaimed the agency of fire. An electrical machine, an air-pump, the galvanic trough, a solar microscope, and large glass jars and receivers, were conspicuous amidst the mass of matter. Upon the table by his side were some books lying open, several letters, a bundle of new pens, and a bottle of japan ink, that served as an inkstand ; a piece of deal, lately part of the lid of a box, with many chips, and a handsome razor that had been used as a knife. There were bottles of soda water, sugar, pieces of lemon, and the traces of an effervescent beverage. Two piles of books supported the tongs, and these upheld a small glass retort above an argand lamp. I had not been seated many minutes before the liquor in the vessel boiled over, adding fresh stains to the table, and rising in fumes with a most disagreeable odour. Shelley snatched the glass quickly, and dashing it in pieces among the ashes under the gate, increased the unpleasant and penetrating efflu-
vium.

He then proceeded, with much eagerness and enthusiasm, to show me the various instruments, especially the electrical apparatus ; turning round the handle very rapidly, so that the fierce, crackling sparks flew forth ; and presently standing upon the stool with glass feet, he begged me to work the machine until he was filled with the fluid, so that his long, wild locks bristled and stood on end. Afterwards he charged a powerful battery of several large jars ; labouring with vast energy, and discoursing with increasing vehemence of the

marvellous powers of electricity, of thunder and lightning ; describing an electrical kite that he had made at home, and projecting another and an enormous one, or rather a combination of many kites, that would draw down from the sky an immense volume of electricity, the whole ammunition of a mighty thunderstorm ; and this being directed to some point would there produce the most stupendous results.

In these exhibitions and in such conversation the time passed away rapidly, and the hour of dinner approached. Having pricked *æger* that day, or, in other words, having caused his name to be entered as an invalid, he was not required, or permitted, to dine in hall, or to appear in public within the college, or without the walls, until a night's rest should have restored the sick man to health.

He requested me to spend the evening at his rooms ; I consented, nor did I fail to attend immediately after dinner. We conversed until a late hour on miscellaneous topics. I remember that he spoke frequently of poetry, and that there was the same animation, the same glowing zeal, which had characterized his former discourses, and was so opposite to the listless languor, the monstrous indifference, if not the absolute antipathy, to learning, that so strangely darkened the collegiate atmosphere. It would seem, indeed, to one who rightly considered the final cause of the institution of an University, that all the rewards, all the honours, the most opulent foundation could accumulate, would be inadequate to remunerate an individual, whose thirst for knowledge was so intense, and his activity in the pursuit of it so wonderful and so unwearied. I participated in his enthusiasm, and soon forgot the shrill and unmusical voice that had at first seemed intolerable to my ear.

He was, indeed, a whole University in himself to me, in respect of the stimulus and incitement which his example afforded to my love of study, and he amply atoned for the disappointment I had felt on my arrival at Oxford. In one respect alone could I pretend to resemble him, in an ardent desire to gain knowledge ; and as our tastes were the same in many particulars, we immediately became, through sympathy, most intimate and altogether inseparable companions. We almost invariably passed the afternoon and evening together ; at first alternately at our respective rooms, through a certain punctiliousness, but afterwards, when we became more familiar, most frequently by far at his ; sometimes one or

two good and harmless men of our acquaintance were present, but we were usually alone. His rooms were preferred to mine, because there his philosophical apparatus was at hand ; and at that period he was not perfectly satisfied with the condition and circumstances of his existence, unless he was able to start from his seat at any moment, and seizing the air-pump, some magnets, the electrical machine, or the bottles containing those noxious and nauseous fluids, wherewith he incessantly besmeared and disfigured himself and his goods, to ascertain by actual experiment the value of some new idea that rushed into his brain. He spent much time in working by fits and starts and in an irregular manner with his instruments, and especially consumed his hours and his money in the assiduous cultivation of chemistry.

We have heard that one of the most distinguished of modern discoverers was abrupt, hasty, and to appearance disorderly in the conduct of his manipulations : the variety of the habits of great men is indeed infinite ; it is impossible, therefore, to decide peremptorily as to the capabilities of individuals from their course of proceeding, yet it certainly seemed highly improbable that Shelley was qualified to succeed in a science wherein a scrupulous minuteness and a mechanical accuracy are indispensable. His chemical operations seemed to an unskilful observer to promise nothing but disasters. His hands, his clothes, his books, and his furniture were stained and corroded by mineral acids. More than one hole in the carpet could elucidate the ultimate phenomenon of combustion ; especially a formidable aperture in the middle of the room, where the floor also had been burnt by the spontaneous ignition caused by mixing ether with some other fluid in a crucible ; and the honourable wound was speedily enlarged by rents, for the philosopher, as he hastily crossed the room in pursuit of truth, was frequently caught in it by the foot. Many times a day, but always in vain, would the sedulous scout say, pointing to the scorched boards with a significant look

‘ Would it not be better, sir, for us to get this place mended ? ’

It seemed but too probable that in the rash ardour of experiment he would some day set the college on fire, or that he would blind, maim, or kill himself by the explosion of combustibles. It was still more likely indeed that he would poison himself, for plates and glasses, and every part of his tea equipage were used indiscriminately with crucibles, retorts, and recipients, to contain the most deleterious ingre-

dients. To his infinite diversion I used always to examine every drinking-vessel narrowly, and often to rinse it carefully, after that evening when we were taking tea by firelight, and my attention being attracted by the sound of something in the cup into which I was about to pour tea, I was induced to look into it. I found a seven-shilling piece partly dissolved by the *aqua regia* in which it was immersed. Although he laughed at my caution, he used to speak with horror of the consequences of having inadvertently swallowed, through a similar accident, some mineral poison, I think arsenic, at Eton, which he declared had not only seriously injured his health, but that he feared he should never entirely recover from the shock it had inflicted on his constitution. It seemed probable, notwithstanding his positive assertions, that his lively fancy exaggerated the recollection of the unpleasant and permanent taste, of the sickness and disorder of the stomach, which might arise from taking a minute portion of some poisonous substance by the like chance, for there was no vestige of a more serious and lasting injury in his youthful and healthy, although somewhat delicate aspect.

I knew little of the physical sciences, and I felt therefore but a slight degree of interest in them; I looked upon his philosophical apparatus merely as toys and playthings, like a chess-board or a billiard-table. Through lack of sympathy, his zeal, which was at first so ardent, gradually cooled; and he applied himself to these pursuits, after a short time, less frequently and with less earnestness. The true value of them was often the subject of animated discussion; and I remember one evening at my own rooms, when we had sought refuge against the intense cold in the little inner apartment, or study, I referred, in the course of our debate, to a passage in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, where Socrates speaks in disparagement of Physics. He read it several times very attentively, and more than once aloud, slowly and with emphasis, and it appeared to make a strong impression on him.

Notwithstanding our difference of opinion as to the importance of chemistry, and on some other questions, our intimacy rapidly increased, and we soon formed the habit of passing the greater part of our time together; nor did this constant intercourse interfere with my usual studies. I never visited his rooms until one o'clock, by which hour, as I rose very early, I had not only attended the college lectures, but had

read in private for several hours. I was enabled, moreover to continue my studies afterwards in the evening, in consequence of a very remarkable peculiarity. My young and energetic friend was then overcome by extreme drowsiness, which speedily and completely vanquished him; he would sleep from two to four hours, often so soundly that his slumbers resembled a deep lethargy; he lay occasionally upon the sofa, but more commonly stretched upon the rug before a large fire, like a cat; and his little round head was exposed to such a fierce heat, that I used to wonder how he was able to bear it. Sometimes I have interposed some shelter, but rarely with any permanent effect; for the sleeper usually contrived to turn himself, and to roll again into the spot where the fire glowed the brightest. His torpor was generally profound, but he would sometimes discourse incoherently for a long while in his sleep. At six he would suddenly compose himself, even in the midst of a most animated narrative or of earnest discussion; and he would lie buried in entire forgetfulness, in a sweet and mighty oblivion, until ten, when he would suddenly start up, and rubbing his eyes with great violence, and passing his fingers swiftly through his long hair, would enter at once into a vehement argument, or begin to recite verses, either of his own composition or from the works of others, with a rapidity and an energy that were often quite painful. During the period of his occultation I took tea, and read or wrote without interruption. He would sometimes sleep for a shorter time, for about two hours; postponing for the like period the commencement of his retreat to the rug, and rising with tolerable punctuality at ten; and sometimes, although rarely, he was able entirely to forgo the accustomed refreshment.

We did not consume the whole of our time, when he was awake, in conversation; we often read apart, and more frequently together: our joint studies were occasionally interrupted by long discussions—nevertheless I could enumerate many works, and several of them are extensive and important, which we perused completely and very carefully in this manner. At ten, when he awoke, he was always ready for his supper, which he took with a peculiar relish: after that social meal his mind was clear and penetrating, and his discourse eminently brilliant. He was unwilling to separate; but when the college clock struck two, I used to rise and retire to my room. Our conversations were sometimes considerably prolonged, but they seldom terminated before that chilly

hour of the early morning ; nor did I feel any inconvenience from thus reducing the period of rest to scarcely five hours.

A disquisition on some difficult question in the open air was not less agreeable to him than by the fireside ; if the weather was fine, or rather not altogether intolerable, we used to sally forth, when we met at once.

I have already pointed out several contradictions in his appearance and character ; his ordinary preparation for a rural walk formed a very remarkable contrast with his mild aspect and pacific habits. He furnished himself with a pair of duelling pistols, and a good store of powder and ball ; and when he came to a solitary spot, he pinned a card, or fixed some other mark upon a tree or a bank, and amused himself by firing at it : he was a pretty good shot, and was much delighted at his success. He often urged me to try my hand and eye, assuring me that I was not aware of the pleasure of a good hit. One day when he was peculiarly pressing, I took up a pistol and asked him what I should aim at ? And observing a slab of wood, about as big as a hearthrug, standing against a wall, I named it as being a proper object. He said that it was much too far off, it was better to wait until we came nearer ; but I answered—' I may as well fire here as anywhere', and instantly discharged my pistol. To my infinite surprise, the ball struck the elm target most accurately in the very centre. Shelley was delighted ; he ran to the board, placed his chin close to it—gazed at the hole where the bullet was lodged—examined it attentively on all sides many times, and more than once measured the distance to the spot where I had stood.

I never knew any one so prone to admire as he was, in whom the principle of veneration was so strong ; he extolled my skill, urged me repeatedly to display it again, and begged that I would give him instructions in an art in which I so much excelled. I suffered him to enjoy his wonder for a few days, and then I told him, and with difficulty persuaded him, that my success was purely accidental ; for I had seldom fired a pistol before, and never with ball, but with shot only, as a schoolboy, in clandestine and bloodless expeditions against blackbirds and yellowhammers.

The duelling pistols were a most discordant interruption of the repose of a quiet country walk ; besides, he handled them with such inconceivable carelessness, that I had perpetually reason to apprehend that, as a trifling episode in the grand and heroic work of drilling a hole through the back of

a card, or the front of one of his father's franks, he would shoot himself, or me, or both of us. How often have I lamented that Nature, which so rarely bestows upon the world a creature endowed with such marvellous talents, ungraciously rendered the gift less precious by implanting a fatal taste for perilous recreations, and a thoughtlessness in the pursuit of them, that often caused his existence from one day to another to seem in itself miraculous. I opposed the practice of walking armed, and I at last succeeded in inducing him to leave the pistols at home, and to forbear the use of them. I prevailed, I believe, not so much by argument or persuasion, as by secretly abstracting, when he equipped himself for the field, and it was not difficult with him, the powder-flask, the flints, or some other indispensable article. One day, I remember, he was grievously discomposed, and seriously offended, to find, on producing his pistols, after descending rapidly into a quarry, where he proposed to take a few shots, that not only had the flints been removed, but the screws, and the bits of steel at the tops of the cocks, which hold the flints, were also wanting. He determined to return to College for them—I accompanied him. I tempted him, however, by the way, to try to define anger, and to discuss the nature of that affection of the mind, to which, as the discussion waxed warm, he grew exceedingly hostile in theory, and could not be brought to admit that it could possibly be excusable in any case. In the course of conversation, moreover, he suffered himself to be insensibly turned away from his original path and purpose. I have heard, that some years after he left Oxford he resumed the practice of pistol-shooting, and attained to a very unusual degree of skill in an accomplishment so entirely incongruous with his nature.

Of rural excursions he was at all times fond ; he loved to walk in the woods, to stroll on the banks of the Thames, but especially to wander about Shotover Hill. There was a pond at the foot of the hill, before ascending it, and on the left of the road ; it was formed by the water which had filled an old quarry : whenever he was permitted to shape his course as he would, he proceeded to the edge of this pool, although the scene had no other attractions than a certain wildness and barrenness. Here he would linger until dusk, gazing in silence on the water, repeating verses aloud, or earnestly discussing themes that had no connexion with surrounding objects. Sometimes he would raise a stone as large as he

could lift, deliberately throw it into the water as far as his strength enabled him ; then he would loudly exult at the splash, and would quietly watch the decreasing agitation, until the last faint ring and almost imperceptible ripple disappeared on the still surface. 'Such are the effects of an impulse on the air', he would say ; and he complained of our ignorance of the theory of sound—that the subject was obscure and mysterious, and many of the phenomena were contradictory and inexplicable. He asserted that the science of acoustics ought to be cultivated, and that by well-devised experiments valuable discoveries would undoubtedly be made ; and he related many remarkable stories, connected with the subject, that he had heard or read. Sometimes, he would busy himself in splitting the slaty stones, in selecting thin and flat pieces, and in giving them a round form ; and when he had collected a sufficient number, he would gravely make ducks and drakes with them, counting, with the utmost glee, the number of bounds, as they flew along skimming the surface of the pond. He was a devoted worshipper of the water-nymphs ; for whenever he found a pool, or even a small puddle, he would loiter near it, and it was no easy task to get him to quit it. He had not yet learned that art, from which he afterwards derived so much pleasure—the construction of paper boats. He twisted a morsel of paper into a form that a lively fancy might consider a likeness of a boat, and committing it to the water, he anxiously watched the fortunes of the frail bark, which, if it was not soon swamped by the faint winds and miniature waves, gradually imbibed water through its porous sides, and sank. Sometimes, however, the fairy vessel performed its little voyage, and reached the opposite shore of the puny ocean in safety. It is astonishing with what keen delight he engaged in this singular pursuit. It was not easy for an uninitiated spectator to bear with tolerable patience the vast delay, on the brink of a wretched pond upon a bleak common, and in the face of a cutting north-east wind, on returning to dinner from a long walk at sunset on a cold winter's day ; nor was it easy to be so harsh as to interfere with a harmless gratification, that was evidently exquisite. It was not easy, at least, to induce the shipbuilder to desist from launching his tiny fleets, so long as any timber remained in the dockyard. I prevailed once, and once only ; it was one of those bitter Sundays that commonly receive the new year ; the sun had set, and it had almost begun to snow. I

had exhorted him long in vain, with the eloquence of a frozen and famished man, to proceed ; at last, I said in despair—alluding to his never-ending creations, for a paper-navy that was to be set afloat simultaneously lay at his feet, and he was busily constructing more, with blue and swollen hands—‘ Shelley, there is no use in talking to you ; you are the Demiurgus of Plato ! ’ He instantly caught up the whole flotilla, and bounding homeward with mighty strides, laughed aloud—laughed like a giant, as he used to say. So long as his paper lasted, he remained riveted to the spot, fascinated by this peculiar amusement ; all waste paper was rapidly consumed, then the covers of letters, next letters of little value : the most precious contributions of the most esteemed correspondent, although eyed wistfully many times, and often returned to the pocket, were sure to be sent at last in pursuit of the former squadrons. Of the portable volumes which were the companions of his rambles, and he seldom went out without a book, the fly-leaves were commonly wanting—he had applied them as our ancestor Noah applied Gopher wood ; but learning was so sacred in his eyes, that he never trespassed farther upon the integrity of the copy ; the work itself was always respected. It has been said, that he once found himself on the north bank of the Serpentine river without the materials for indulging those inclinations, which the sight of water invariably inspired, for he had exhausted his supplies on the round pond in Kensington Gardens. Not a single scrap of paper could be found, save only a bank-post bill for fifty pounds ; he hesitated long, but yielded at last ; he twisted it into a boat with the extreme refinement of his skill, and committed it with the utmost dexterity to fortune, watching its progress, if possible, with a still more intense anxiety than usual. Fortune often favours those who frankly and fully trust her ; the north-east wind gently wafted the costly skiff to the south bank, where, during the latter part of the voyage, the venturous owner had waited its arrival with patient solicitude. The story, of course, is a Mythic fable, but it aptly portrays the dominion of a singular and most unaccountable passion over the mind of an enthusiast.

But to return to Oxford. Shelley disliked exceedingly all college-meetings, and especially one which was the most popular with others—the public dinner in the hall ; he used often to absent himself, and he was greatly delighted whenever I agreed to partake with him in a slight luncheon at one, to

take a long walk into the country, and to return after dark to tea and supper in his rooms. On one of these expeditions we wandered farther than usual, without regarding the distance or the lapse of time ; but we had no difficulty in finding our way home, for the night was clear and frosty, and the moon at the full ; and most glorious was the spectacle as we approached the City of Colleges, and passed through the silent streets. It was near ten when we entered our college ; not only was it too late for tea, but supper was ready, the cloth laid, and the table spread. A large dish of scalloped oysters had been set within the fender, to be kept hot for the famished wanderers.

Among the innumerable contradictions in the character and deportment of the youthful poet was a strange mixture of a singular grace, which manifested itself in his actions and gestures, with an occasional awkwardness almost as remarkable. As soon as we entered the room, he placed his chair as usual directly in front of the fire, and eagerly pressed forward to warm himself, for the frost was severe, and he was very sensible of cold. Whilst cowering over the fire and rubbing his hands, he abruptly set both his feet at once upon the edge of the fender ; it immediately flew up, threw under the grate the dish, which was broken into two pieces, and the whole of the delicious mess was mingled with the cinders and ashes, that had accumulated for several hours. It was impossible that a hungry and frozen pedestrian should restrain a strong expression of indignation, or that he should forbear, notwithstanding the exasperation of cold and hunger, from smiling and forgiving the accident at seeing the whimsical air and aspect of the offender, as he held up with the shovel the long-anticipated food, deformed by ashes, coals, and cinders, with a ludicrous expression of exaggerated surprise, disappointment, and contrition. It would be easy to fill many volumes with reminiscences characteristic of my young friend, and of these the most trifling would perhaps best illustrate his innumerable peculiarities. With the discerning, trifles, although they are accounted such, have their value. A familiarity with the daily habits of Shelley, and the knowledge of his demeanour in private, will greatly facilitate, and they are perhaps even essential to, the full comprehension of his views and opinions. Traits that unfold an infantine simplicity, the genuine simplicity of true genius, will be slighted by those only who are ignorant of the qualities that constitute greatness of soul : the philosophical observer knows well, that to have

shown a mind to be original and perfectly natural, is no inconsiderable step in demonstrating that it is also great.

Our supper had disappeared under the grate, but we were able to silence the importunity of hunger. As the supply of cheese was scanty, Shelley pretended, in order to atone for his carelessness, that he never ate it; but I refused to take more than my share, and notwithstanding his reiterated declarations, that it was offensive to his palate and hurtful to his stomach, as I was inexorable, he devoured the remainder, greedily swallowing not merely the cheese, but the rind also, after scraping it cursorily, and with a curious tenderness. A tankard of the stout brown ale of our college aided us greatly in removing the sense of cold, and in supplying the deficiency of food, so that we turned our chairs towards the fire, and began to brew our negus as cheerfully as if the bounty of the hospitable gods had not been intercepted.

We reposed ourselves after the fatigue of an unusually long walk, and silence was broken by short remarks only, and at considerable intervals, respecting the beauty of moonlight scenes, and especially of that we had just enjoyed; the serenity and clearness of the night exceeded any we had before witnessed; the light was so strong it would have been easy to read or write. 'How strange was it, that light proceeding from the sun, which was at such a prodigious distance, and at that time entirely out of sight, should be reflected from the moon, and that was no trifling journey, and sent back to the earth in such abundance, and with so great force!'

Languid expressions of admiration dropped from our lips, as we stretched our stiff and wearied limbs towards the genial warmth of a blazing fire. On a sudden, Shelley started from his seat, seized one of the candles, and began to walk about the room on tiptoe in profound silence, often stooping low, and evidently engaged in some mysterious search. I asked him what he wanted, but he returned no answer, and continued his whimsical and secret inquisition, which he prosecuted in the same extraordinary manner in the bedroom and the little study. It had occurred to him that a dessert had possibly been sent to his rooms whilst we were absent, and had been put away. He found the object of his pursuit at last, and produced some small dishes from the study; apples, oranges, almonds and raisins, and a little cake. These he set close together at my side of the table, without speaking, but with a triumphant look, yet with the air of a penitent making restitu-

tion and reparation, and then resumed his seat. The unexpected succour was very seasonable ; this light fare, a few glasses of negus, warmth, and especially rest, restored our lost vigour, and our spirits. We spoke of our happy life, of Universities, of what they might be ; of what they were. How powerfully they might stimulate the student, how much valuable instruction they might impart ! We agreed that, although the least possible benefit was conferred upon us in this respect at Oxford, we were deeply indebted, nevertheless, to the great and good men of former days, who founded those glorious institutions, for devising a scheme of life, which, however deflected from its original direction, still tended to study, and especially for creating establishments that called young men together from all parts of the empire, and for endowing them with a celebrity that was able to induce so many to congregate. Without such an opportunity of meeting we should never have been acquainted with each other ; in so large a body there must doubtless be many at that time, who were equally thankful for the occasion of the like intimacy ; and in former generations how many friendships that had endured through all the various trials of a long and eventful life, had arisen here from accidental communion, as in our own case.

If there was little positive encouragement, there were various negative inducements to acquire learning ; there were no interruptions, no secular cares ; our wants were well supplied without the slightest exertion on our part, and the exact regularity of academical existence cut off that dissipation of the hours and the thoughts, which so often prevails where the daily course is not pre-arranged. The necessity of early rising was beneficial ; like the Pythagoreans of old, we began with the Gods ; the salutary attendance in chapel every morning not only compelled us to quit our beds betimes, but imposed additional duties conducive to habits of industry ; it was requisite, not merely to rise, but to leave our rooms, to appear in public, and to remain long enough to destroy the disposition to indolence, which might still linger if we were permitted to remain by the fireside. To pass some minutes in society, yet in solemn silence, is like the Pythagorean initiation, and we auspicate the day happily by commencing with sacred things. I scarcely ever visited Shelley before one o'clock ; when I met him in the morning at chapel, he used studiously to avoid all communication, and, as soon as the doors were opened, to effect a ludicrously precipitate retreat to his rooms.

'The country near Oxford', he continued, as we reposed after our meagre supper, 'has no pretensions to peculiar beauty, but it is quiet, and pleasant, and rural, and purely agricultural after the good old fashion; it is not only unpolluted by manufactures and commerce, but it is exempt from the desecration of the modern husbandry, of a system which accounts the farmer a manufacturer of hay and corn: I delight to wander over it'. He enlarged upon the pleasure of our pedestrian excursions, and added—'I can imagine few things that would annoy me more severely than to be disturbed in our tranquil course; it would be a cruel calamity to be interrupted by some untoward accident, to be compelled to quit our calm and agreeable retreat. Not only would it be a sad mortification, but a real misfortune, for if I remain here I shall study more closely and with greater advantage than I could in any other situation that I can conceive. Are you not of the same opinion?'

'Entirely.'

'I regret only that the period of our residence is limited to four years; I wish they would revive, for our sake, the old term of six or seven years. If we consider how much there is for us to learn'—here he paused and sighed deeply through that despondency which sometimes comes over the unwearied and zealous student—'we shall allow that the longer period would still be far too short!'

I assented, and we discoursed concerning the abridgment of the ancient term of residence, and the diminution of the academical year by frequent, protracted, and most inconvenient vacations.

'To quit Oxford', he said, 'would be still more unpleasant to you than to myself, for you aim at objects that I do not seek to compass, and you cannot fail, since you are resolved to place your success beyond the reach of chance.'

He enumerated with extreme rapidity and in his enthusiastic strain, some of the benefits and comforts of a college life.

'Then the *oak* is such a blessing', he exclaimed with peculiar fervour, clasping his hands, and repeating often—'the oak is such a blessing!' slowly and in a solemn tone. 'The oak alone goes far towards making this place a paradise. In what other spot in the world, surely in none that I have hitherto visited, can you say confidently, it is perfectly impossible, physically impossible, that I should be disturbed? Whether a man desire solitary study, or to enjoy the society of a friend or

two, he is secure against interruption. It is not so in a house, not by any means ; there is not the same protection in a house, even in the best-contrived house. The servant is bound to answer the door ; he must appear and give some excuse : he may betray by hesitation and confusion that he utters a falsehood ; he must expose himself to be questioned ; he must open the door and violate your privacy in some degree ; besides there are other doors, there are windows at least, through which a prying eye can detect some indication that betrays the mystery. How different is it here ! The bore arrives ; the outer door is shut ; it is black and solid, and perfectly impenetrable, as is your secret ; the doors are all alike ; he can distinguish mine from yours by the geographical position only. He may knock ; he may call ; he may kick, if he will ; he may inquire of a neighbour, but he can inform him of nothing ; he can only say, the door is shut, and this he knows already. He may leave his card, that you may rejoice over it, and at your escape ; he may write upon it the hour when he proposes to call again, to put you upon your guard, and that he may be quite sure of seeing the back of your door once more. When the bore meets you and says, I called at your house at such a time, you are required to explain your absence, to prove an *alibi* in short, and perhaps to undergo a rigid cross-examination ; but if he tells you, " I called at your rooms yesterday at three, and the door was shut ", you have only to say, " Did you ? was it ? " and there the matter ends.'

' Were you not charmed with your oak ? did it not instantly captivate you ? '

' My introduction to it was somewhat unpleasant and unpropitious. The morning after my arrival I was sitting at breakfast ; my scout, the Arimaspiian, apprehending that the singleness of his eye may impeach his character for officiousness, in order to escape the reproach of seeing half as much only as other men, is always striving to prove that he sees at least twice as far as the most sharpsighted : after many demonstrations of superabundant activity, he inquired if I wanted anything more ; I answered in the negative. He had already opened the door : " Shall I sport, sir ? " he asked briskly as he stood upon the threshold. He seemed so unlike a sporting character, that I was curious to learn in what sport he proposed to indulge. I answered—" Yes, by all means ", and anxiously watched him, but to my surprise and disappointment he instantly vanished. As soon as I had finished my

breakfast, I sallied forth to survey Oxford ; I opened one door quickly, and not suspecting that there was a second, I struck my head against it with some violence. The blow taught me to observe that every set of rooms has two doors, and I soon learned that the outer door, which is thick and solid, is called the oak, and to shut it is termed, to sport. I derived so much benefit from my oak, that I soon pardoned this slight inconvenience : it is surely the tree of knowledge.'

'Who invented the oak ?'

'The inventors of the science of living in rooms, or chambers—the Monks.'

'Ah ! they were sly fellows ; none but men who were reputed to devote themselves for many hours to prayers, to religious meditations, and holy abstractions, would ever have been permitted quietly to place at pleasure such a barrier between themselves and the world. We now reap the advantage of their reputation for sanctity ; I shall revere my oak more than ever, since its origin is so sacred.'

The sympathies of Shelley were instantaneous and powerful with those who evinced in any degree the qualities for which he was himself so remarkable—simplicity of character, unaffected manners, genuine modesty, and an honest willingness to acquire knowledge, and he sprang to meet their advances with an ingenuous eagerness which was peculiar to him ; but he was suddenly and violently repelled, like the needle from the negative pole of the magnet, by any indication of pedantry, presumption, or affectation. So much was he disposed to take offence at such defects, and so acutely was he sensible of them, that he was sometimes unjust, through an excessive sensitiveness, in his estimate of those, who had shocked him by sins, of which he was himself utterly incapable. Whatever might be the attainments, and however solid the merits of the persons filling at that time the important office of instructors in the University, they were entirely destitute of the attractions of manner ; their address was sometimes repulsive, and the formal, priggish tutor was too often intent upon the ordinary academical course alone to the entire exclusion of every other department of knowledge : his thoughts were wholly engrossed by it, and so narrow were his views that he overlooked the claims of all merit, however exalted, except success in the public examinations.

'They are very dull people here,' Shelley said to me one evening soon after his arrival, with a long-drawn sigh, after

musings awhile ; ' a little man sent for me this morning, and told me in an almost inaudible whisper that I must read : " you must read " , he said many times in his small voice. I answered that I had no objection. He persisted ; so, to satisfy him, for he did not appear to believe me, I told him I had some books in my pocket, and I began to take them out. He stared at me, and said that was not exactly what he meant : " you must read *Prometheus Vincit*, and Demosthenes *de Corona*, and Euclid " . Must I read Euclid ? I asked sorrowfully. " Yes, certainly ; and when you have read the Greek works I have mentioned, you must begin Aristotle's *Ethics*, and then you may go on to his other treatises. It is of the utmost importance to be well acquainted with Aristotle " . This he repeated so often that I was quite tired, and at last I said, Must I care about Aristotle ? what if I do not mind Aristotle ? I then left him, for he seemed to be in great perplexity.'

Notwithstanding the slight he had thus cast upon the great master of the science, that has so long been the staple of Oxford, he was not blind to the value of the science itself. He took the scholastic logic very kindly, seized its distinctions with his accustomed quickness, felt a keen interest in the study, and patiently endured the exposition of those minute discriminations, which the tyro is apt to condemn as vain and trifling.

It should seem that the ancient method of communicating the art of syllogizing has been preserved, in part at least, by tradition in this university. I have sometimes met with learned foreigners, who understood the end and object of the scholastic logic, having received the traditional instruction in some of the old universities on the Continent ; but I never found even one of my countrymen, except Oxonians, who rightly comprehended the nature of the science : I may, perhaps, add, that in proportion as the self-taught logicians had laboured in the pursuit, they had gone far astray. It is possible, nevertheless, that those who have drunk at the fountain-head, and have read the *Organon* of Aristotle in the original, may have attained to a just comprehension by their unassisted energies ; but in this age, and in this country, I apprehend the number of such adventurous readers is very inconsiderable.

Shelley frequently exercised his ingenuity in long discussions respecting various questions in logic, and more frequently indulged in metaphysical inquiries. We read several meta-

physical works together, in whole, or in part, for the first time, or after a previous perusal, by one, or by both of us.

The examination of a chapter of Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* would induce him, at any moment, to quit every other pursuit. We read together Hume's *Essays*, and some productions of Scotch metaphysicians, of inferior ability—all with assiduous and friendly altercations, and the latter writers, at least, with small profit, unless some sparks of knowledge were struck out in the collision of debate. We read also certain popular French works, that treat of man, for the most part in a mixed method, metaphysically, morally, and politically. Hume's *Essays* were a favourite book with Shelley, and he was always ready to put forward in argument the doctrines they uphold.

It may seem strange that he should ever have accepted the sceptical philosophy, a system so uncongenial with a fervid and imaginative genius, which can allure the cool, cautious, abstinent reasoner alone, and would deter the enthusiastic, the fanciful, and the speculative. We must bear in mind, however, that he was an eager, bold, and unwearied disputant; and although the position, in which the sceptic and the materialist love to entrench themselves, offers no picturesque attractions to the eye of the poet, it is well adapted for defensive warfare; and it is not easy for an ordinary enemy to dislodge him, who occupies a post that derives strength from the weakness of the assailant. It has been insinuated, that whenever a man of real talent and generous feelings condescends to fight under these colours, he is guilty of a dissimulation, which he deems harmless, perhaps even praiseworthy, for the sake of victory in argument.

It was not a little curious to observe one, whose sanguine temper led him to believe implicitly every assertion, so that it was improbable and incredible, exulting in the success of his philosophical doubts, when, like the calmest and most suspicious of analysts, he refused to admit, without strict proof, propositions that many, who are not deficient in metaphysical prudence, account obvious and self-evident. The sceptical philosophy had another charm; it partook of the new and the wonderful, inasmuch as it called into doubt, and seemed to place in jeopardy, during the joyous hours of disputation, many important practical conclusions. To a soul loving excitement and change, destruction, so that it be on a grand scale, may sometimes prove hardly less inspiring than creation.

The feat of the magician, who, by the touch of his wand, could cause the great pyramid to dissolve into the air, and to vanish from the sight, would be as surprising as the achievement of him who, by the same rod, could instantly raise a similar mass in any chosen spot. If the destruction of the eternal monument was only apparent, the ocular sophism would be at once harmless and ingenious: so was it with the logomachy of the young and strenuous logician, and his intellectual activity merited praise and reward.

There was another reason, moreover, why the sceptical philosophy should be welcome to Shelley at that time: he was young, and it is generally acceptable to youth. It is adopted as the abiding rule of reason throughout life by those only who are distinguished by a sterility of soul, a barrenness of invention, a total dearth of fancy, and a scanty stock of learning. Such, in truth, although the warmth of juvenile blood, the light burthen of few years, and the precipitation of inexperience, may sometimes seem to contradict the assertion, is the state of the mind at the commencement of manhood, when the vessel has as yet received only a small portion of the cargo of the accumulated wisdom of past ages, when the amount of mental operations, that have actually been performed, is small, and the materials, upon which the imagination can work, are insignificant; consequently, the inventions of the young are crude and frigid.

Hence the most fertile mind exactly resembles in early youth the hopeless barrenness of those, who have grown old in vain, as to its actual condition, and it differs only in the unseen capacity for future production. The philosopher who declares that he knows nothing, and that nothing can be known, will readily find followers among the young, for they are sensible that they possess the requisite qualification for entering his school, and are as far advanced in the science of ignorance as their master.

A stranger, who should have chanced to have been present at some of Shelley's disputes, or who knew him only from having read some of the short argumentative essays which he composed as voluntary exercises, would have said, 'Surely the soul of Hume passed by transmigration into the body of that eloquent young man; or rather, he represents one of the enthusiastic and animated materialists of the French school, whom revolutionary violence lately intercepted at an early age in his philosophical career.'

There were times, however, when a visitor, who had listened to glowing discourses delivered with a more intense ardour, would have hailed a young Platonist, breathing forth the ideal philosophy, and in his pursuit of the intellectual world entirely overlooking the material, or noticing it only to condemn it. The tall boy, who is permitted for the first season to scare the partridges with his new fowling-piece, scorns to handle the top or the hoop of his younger brother; thus the man, whose years and studies are mature, slights the first feeble aspirations after the higher departments of knowledge, that were deemed so important during his residence at college. It seems laughable, but it is true, that our knowledge of Plato was derived solely from Dacier's translation of a few of the dialogues, and from an English version of that French translation; we had never attempted a single sentence in the Greek. Since that time, however, I believe, few of our countrymen have read the golden works of that majestic philosopher in the original language more frequently and more carefully than ourselves; and few, if any, with more profit than Shelley. Although the source, whence flowed our earliest taste of the divine philosophy, was scanty and turbid, the draught was not the less grateful to our lips: our zeal in some measure atoned for our poverty.

Shelley was never weary of reading, or of listening to me whilst I read, passages from the dialogues contained in this collection, and especially from the *Phædo*, and he was vehemently excited by the striking doctrines which Socrates unfolds, especially by that which teaches that all our knowledge consists of reminiscences of what we had learned in a former existence. He often rose, paced slowly about the room, shook his long wild locks, and discoursed in a solemn tone and with a mysterious air, speculating concerning our previous condition, and the nature of our life and occupations in that world, where, according to Plato, we had attained to erudition, and had advanced ourselves in knowledge so far that the most studious and the most inventive, or in other words, those who have the best memory, are able to call back a part only, and with much pain and extreme difficulty, of what was formerly familiar to us.

It is hazardous, however, to speak of his earliest efforts as a Platonist, lest they should be confounded with his subsequent advancement; it is not easy to describe his first introduction to the exalted wisdom of antiquity without borrowing

inadvertently from the knowledge which he afterwards acquired. The cold, ungenial, foggy atmosphere of northern metaphysics was less suited to the ardent temperament of his soul, than the warm, bright, vivifying climate of the southern and eastern philosophy; his genius expanded under the benign influence of the latter, and he derived copious instruction from a luminous system, that is only dark through excess of brightness, and seems obscure to vulgar vision through its extreme radiance. Nevertheless, in argument—and to argue on all questions was his dominant passion—he usually adopted the scheme of the sceptics, partly, perhaps, because it was more popular and is more generally understood: the disputant, who would use Plato as his text-book in this age, would reduce his opponents to a small number indeed.

The study of that highest department of ethics, which includes all the inferior branches, and is directed towards the noblest and most important ends, of Jurisprudence, was always next my heart; at an early age it attracted my attention.

When I first endeavoured to turn the regards of Shelley towards this engaging pursuit, he strongly expressed a very decided aversion from such inquiries, deeming them worthless and illiberal. The beautiful theory of the art of right, and the honourable office of administering distributive justice, have been brought into general discredit, unhappily for the best interests of humanity, and, to the vast detriment of the state, into unmerited disgrace in the modern world by the errors of practitioners. An ingenuous mind instinctively shrinks from the contemplation of legal topics, because the word law is associated with and inevitably calls up the idea of the low chicanery of a pettifogging attorney, of the vulgar oppression and gross insolence of a bailiff, or, at best, of the wearisome and unmeaning tautology that distends an act of parliament, and the dull dropsical compositions of the special pleader, the conveyancer, or other draughtsman.

In no country is this unhappy debasement of a most illustrious science more remarkable than in our own; no other nation is so prone to, or so patient of abuses; in no other land are posts in themselves honourable so accessible to the meanest. The spirit of trade favours the degradation, and every commercial town is a well-spring of vulgarity, which sends forth hosts of practitioners devoid of the solid and elegant attainments which could sustain the credit of the science, but so strong in the

artifices that insure success, as not only to monopolize the rewards due to merit, but sometimes even to climb the judgment-seat.

It is not wonderful, therefore, that generous minds, until they have been taught to discriminate, and to distinguish a noble science from ignoble practices, should usually confound them together, hastily condemning the former with the latter. Shelley listened with much attention to questions of natural law, and with the warm interest that he felt in all metaphysical disquisitions, after he had conquered his first prejudice against practical jurisprudence.

The science of right, like other profound and extensive sciences, can only be acquired completely when the foundations have been laid at an early age: had the energies of Shelley's vigorous mind taken this direction at that time, it is impossible to doubt that he would have become a distinguished jurist. Besides that fondness for such inquiries, which is necessary to success in any liberal pursuit, he displayed the most acute sensitiveness of injustice, however slight, and a vivid perception of inconvenience. As soon as a wrong, arising from a proposed enactment, or a supposed decision, was suggested, he instantly rushed into the opposite extreme; and when a greater evil was shown to result from the contrary course which he had so hastily adopted, his intellect was roused, and he endeavoured most earnestly to ascertain the true mean that would secure the just by avoiding the unjust extremes.

I have observed in young men, that the propensity to plunge headlong into a net of difficulty, on being startled at an apparent want of equity in any rule that was propounded, although at first it might seem to imply a lack of caution and foresight—which are eminently the virtues of legislators and of judges—was an unerring prognostic of a natural aptitude for pursuits, wherein eminence is inconsistent with an inertness of the moral sense and a recklessness of the violation of rights, however remote and trifling. Various instances of such aptitude in Shelley might be furnished, but these studies are interesting to a limited number of persons only.

As the mind of Shelley was apt to acquire many of the most valuable branches of liberal knowledge, so there were other portions comprised within the circle of science, for the reception of which, however active and acute, it was entirely unfit. He rejected with marvellous impatience every mathematical

discipline that was offered ; no problem could awaken the slightest curiosity, nor could he be made sensible of the beauty of any theorem. The method of demonstration had no charms for him ; he complained of the insufferable prolixity and the vast tautology of Euclid and the other ancient geometricians ; and when the discoveries of modern analysts were presented, he was immediately distracted, and fell into endless musings.

With respect to the Oriental tongues, he coldly observed that the appearance of the characters was curious. Although he perused with more than ordinary eagerness the relations of travellers in the East, and the translations of the marvellous tales of oriental fancy, he was not attracted by the desire to penetrate the languages which veil these treasures. He would never deign to lend an ear, or an eye, for a moment to my Hebrew studies, in which I had made at that time some small progress ; nor could he be tempted to inquire into the value of the singular lore of the Rabbins.

He was able, like the many, to distinguish a violet from a sunflower, and a cauliflower from a peony : but his botanical knowledge was more limited than that of the least skilful of common observers, for he was neglectful of flowers. He was incapable of apprehending the delicate distinctions of structure which form the basis of the beautiful classification of modern botanists. I was never able to impart even a glimpse of the merits of Ray, or Linnæus, or to encourage a hope that he would ever be competent to see the visible analogies that constitute the marked, yet mutually approaching *genera*, into which the productions of nature, and especially vegetables, are divided.

It may seem invidious to notice imperfections in a mind of the highest order, but the exercise of a due candour, however unwelcome, is required to satisfy those who were not acquainted with Shelley, that the admiration excited by his marvellous talents and manifold virtues in all who were so fortunate as to enjoy the opportunity of examining his merits by frequent intercourse, was not the result of the blind partiality that amiable and innocent dispositions, attractive manners, and a noble and generous bearing sometimes create.

Shelley was always unwilling to visit the remarkable specimens of architecture, the objects of art, and the various antiquities that adorn Oxford ; although, if he encountered them by accident, and they were pointed out to him, he admired

them more sincerely and heartily than the generality of strangers, who, through compliance with fashion, ostentatiously sought them out. His favourite recreation, as I have already stated, was a free, unrestrained ramble into the country.

After quitting the city and its environs by walking briskly along the highway for several miles, it was his delight to strike boldly into the fields, to cross the country daringly on foot, as is usual with sportsmen in shooting ; to perform, as it were, a pedestrian steeple-chase. He was strong, light, and active, and in all respects well suited for such exploits, and we used frequently to traverse a considerable tract in this manner, especially when the frost had dried the land, had given complete solidity to the most treacherous paths, and had thrown a natural bridge over spots that in open weather during the winter would have been nearly impassable.

By resolutely piercing through a district in this manner, we often stumbled upon objects in our humble travels that created a certain surprise and interest : some of them are still fresh in my recollection. My susceptible companion was occasionally much delighted and strongly excited by incidents that would perhaps have seemed unimportant trifles to others.

One day we had penetrated somewhat farther than usual, for the ground was in excellent order, and as the day was intensely cold, although bright and sunny, we had pushed on with uncommon speed. I do not remember the direction we took ; nor can I even determine on which side of the Thames our course lay. We had crossed roads and lanes, and had traversed open fields and inclosures ; some tall and ancient trees were on our right hand ; we skirted a little wood, and presently came to a small copse. It was guarded by an old hedge, or thicket ; we were deflected, therefore, from our onward course towards the left, and we were winding round it, when the quick eye of my companion perceived a gap ; he instantly dashed in with as much alacrity as if he had suddenly caught a glimpse of a pheasant that he had lately wounded in a district where such game was scarce, and he disappeared in a moment.

I followed him, but with less ardour, and passing through a narrow belt of wood and thicket, I presently found him standing motionless in one of his picturesque attitudes, riveted to the earth in speechless astonishment. He had thrown himself thus precipitately into a trim flower-garden, of a circular,

or rather an oval form, of small dimensions, encompassed by a narrow, but close girdle of trees and underwood ; it was apparently remote from all habitations, and it contrasted strongly with the bleak and bare country through which we had recently passed.

Had the secluded scene been bright with the gay flowers of spring, with hyacinths and tulips ; had it been powdered with mealy auriculas, or conspicuous for a gaudy show of all anemones and of every ranunculus ; had it been profusely decorated by the innumerable roses of summer, it would be easy to understand why it was so cheerful. But we were now in the very heart of winter, and after much frost scarcely a single wretched brumal flower lingered and languished. There was no foliage, save the dark leaves of evergreens, and of them there were many, especially around and on the edges of the magic circle, on which account possibly, but chiefly perhaps through the symmetry of the numerous small parterres, the scrupulous neatness of the corresponding walks, the just ordonnance and disposition of certain benches, the integrity and freshness of the green trellices, and of the skeletons of some arbours, and through every leafless excellence which the dried anatomy of a flower-garden can exhibit, its past and its future wealth seemed to shine forth in its present poverty, and its potential glories adorns its actual disgrace.

The sudden transition from the rugged fields to this garnished and decorated retreat was striking, and held my imagination captive a few moments ; the impression, however, would probably have soon faded from my memory, had it not been fixed there by the recollection of the beings who gave animation and a permanent interest to the polished nook.

We admired the trim and retired garden for some minutes in silence, and afterwards each answered in monosyllables the other's brief expressions of wonder. Neither of us had advanced a single step beyond the edge of the thicket through which we had entered ; but I was about to precede, and to walk round the magic circle, in order fully to survey the place, when Shelley startled me by turning with astonishing rapidity, and dashing through the bushes and the gap in the fence with the mysterious and whimsical agility of a kangaroo. Had he caught a glimpse of a tiger crouching behind the laurels, and preparing to spring upon him, he could not have vanished more promptly, or more silently. I was habituated to his abrupt movements, nevertheless his alacrity surprised me,

and I tried in vain to discover what object had scared him away. I retired, therefore, to the gap, and when I reached it, I saw him already at some distance, proceeding with gigantic strides nearly in the same route by which we came. I ran after him, and when I rejoined him, he had halted upon a turn-pike-road, and was hesitating as to the course he ought too pursue. It was our custom to advance across the country as far as the utmost limits of our time would permit, and to go back to Oxford by the first public road we found, after attaining the extreme distance to which we could venture to wander.

Having ascertained the route homeward, we pursued it quickly, as we were wont, but less rapidly than Shelley had commenced his hasty retreat. He had perceived that the garden was attached to a gentleman's house, and he had consequently quitted it thus precipitately. I had already observed on the right a winding path that led through a plantation to certain offices, which showed that a house was about a quarter of a mile from the spot where I then stood.

Had I been aware that the garden was connected with a residence, I certainly should not have trespassed upon it ; but having entered unconsciously, and since the owner was too far removed to be annoyed by observing the intrusion, I was tempted to remain a short time to examine a spot which, during my brief visit, seemed so singular. The superior and highly sensitive delicacy of my companion instantly took the alarm on discovering indications of a neighbouring mansion : hence his marvellous precipitancy in withdrawing himself from the garnished retirement he had unwittingly penetrated ; and we had advanced some distance along the road before he had entirely overcome his modest confusion.

Shelley had looked on the ornate inclosure with a poet's eye, and as we hastily pursued our course towards Oxford by the frozen and sounding way, whilst the day rapidly declined, he discoursed of it fancifully, and with a more glowing animation than ordinary, like one agitated by a divine fury, and by the impulse of inspiring Deity. He continued, indeed, so long to enlarge upon the marvels of the enchanted grove, that I hinted the enchantress might possibly be at hand, and since he was so eloquent concerning the nest, what would have been his astonishment had he been permitted to see the bird herself.

He sometimes described with a curious fastidiousness the

qualities, which a female must possess, to kindle the fire of love in his bosom : the imaginative youth supposed that he was to be moved by the most absolute perfection alone. It is equally impossible to doubt the exquisite refinement of his taste, or the boundless power of the most mighty of divinities ; to refuse to believe that he was a just and skilful critic of feminine beauty and grace, and of whatever is attractive, or that he was never practically as blind, at the least, as men of ordinary talent. How sadly should we disparage the triumphs of Love were we to maintain that he is able to lead astray the senses of the vulgar alone !

In the theory of love, however, a poet will rarely err. Shelley's lively fancy had painted a goodly portraiture of the mistress of the fair garden, nor were apt words wanting to convey to me a faithful copy of the bright original. It would be a cruel injustice to an orator, should a plain man attempt, after a silence of more than twenty years, to revive his glowing harangue from faded recollections ; I will not seek, therefore, to pourtray the likeness of the ideal nymph of the flower-garden.

'Since your fairy gardener', I said, 'has so completely taken possession of your imagination'—and he was wonderfully excited by the unexpected scene and his own splendid decorations—'it is a pity we did not notice the situation, for I am quite sure I should not be able to return thither, to recover your Eden, and the Eve whom you created to till it ; and I doubt whether you could guide me.'

He acknowledged that he was as incapable of finding it again, as of leading me to that paradise to which I had compared it.

'You may laugh at my enthusiasm', he continued, 'but you must allow that you were not less struck by the singularity of that mysterious corner of the earth than myself ; you are equally entitled, therefore, to dwell there, at least in fancy, and to find a partner whose character will harmonise with the genius of the place.'

He then declared, that henceforth it should be deemed the possession of two tutelary nymphs, not of one ; and he proceeded with unabated fervour, to delineate the second patroness, and to distinguish her from the first.

'No !' he exclaimed, pausing in the rapid career of words, and for a while he was somewhat troubled, 'the seclusion is too sweet, too holy, to be the theatre of ordinary love ; the

love of the sexes, however pure, still retains some taint of earthly grossness ; we must not admit it within the sanctuary.'

He was silent for several minutes, and his anxiety visibly increased.

'The love of a mother for her child is more refined ; it is more disinterested, more spiritual ; but ', he added, after some reflection, 'the very existence of the child still connects it with the passion, which we have discarded ' ; and he relapsed into his former musings.

'The love a sister bears towards a sister ', he exclaimed abruptly, and with an air of triumph, 'is unexceptionable.'

The idea pleased him, and as he strode along he assigned the trim garden to two sisters, affirming, with the confidence of an inventor, that it owed its neatness to the assiduous culture of their neat hands ; that it was their constant haunt ; the care of it their favourite pastime, and its prosperity, next after the welfare of each other, the chief wish of both. He described their appearance, their habits, their feelings, and drew a lovely picture of their amiable and innocent attachment ; of the meek and dutiful regard of the younger, which partook, in some degree, of filial reverence, but was more facile and familiar ; and of the protecting, instructing, hoping fondness of the elder, that resembled maternal tenderness, but had less of reserve and more of sympathy. In no other relation could the intimacy be equally perfect ; not even between brothers, for their life is less domestic ; there is a separation in their pursuits, and an independence in the masculine character. The occupations of all females of the same age and rank are the same, and by night sisters cherish each other in the same quiet nest. Their union wears not only the grace of delicacy, but of fragility also ; for it is always liable to be suddenly destroyed by the marriage of either party, or at least to be interrupted and suspended for an indefinite period.

He depicted so eloquently the excellence of sisterly affection, and he drew so distinctly and so minutely, the image of the two sisters, to whom he chose to ascribe the unusual comeliness of the spot into which we had unintentionally intruded, that the trifling incident has been impressed upon my memory, and has been intimately associated in my mind, through his creations, with his poetic character.

The prince of Roman eloquence affirms that the good man alone can be a perfect orator—and truly, for without the weight of a spotless reputation, it is certain that the most

artful and elaborate discourses must want authority, the main ingredient in persuasion.

The position is, at least, equally true of the poet whose grand strength always lies in the ethical force of his compositions ; and these are great in proportion to the efficient greatness of their moral purpose. If, therefore, we would criticise poetry correctly, and from the foundation, it behoves us to examine the morality of the bard.

In no individual, perhaps, was the moral sense ever more completely developed than in Shelley ; in no being was the perception of right and of wrong more acute. The biographer who takes upon himself the pleasing and instructive, but difficult and delicate task of composing a faithful history of his whole life, will frequently be compelled to discuss the important questions, whether his conduct, at certain periods, was altogether such as ought to be proposed for imitation ; whether he was ever misled by an ardent imagination a glowing temperament, something of hastiness in choice, and a certain constitutional impatience ; whether, like less gifted mortals, he ever shared in the common portion of mortality, —repentance ; and to what extent ?

Such inquiries, however, do not fall within the compass of a brief narrative of his career at the University. The unmatured mind of a boy is capable of good intentions only, and of generous and kindly feelings, and these were pre-eminent in him. It will be proper to unfold the excellence of his dispositions, not for the sake of vain and empty praise, but simply to show his aptitude to receive the sweet fury of the Muses.

His inextinguishable thirst for knowledge, his boundless philanthropy, his fearless, it may be, his almost imprudent, pursuit of truth, have been already exhibited. If mercy to beasts be a criterion of a good man, numerous instances of extreme tenderness would demonstrate his worth. I will mention one only.

We were walking one afternoon in Bagley Wood ; on turning a corner, we suddenly came upon a boy who was driving an ass. It was very young, and very weak, and was staggering beneath a most disproportionate load of faggots, and he was belabouring its lean ribs angrily and violently with a short, thick, heavy cudgel.

At the sight of cruelty Shelley was instantly transported far beyond the usual measure of excitement : he sprang for-

ward, and was about to interpose with energetic and indignant vehemence. I caught him by the arm, and to his present annoyance held him back, and with much difficulty persuaded him to allow me to be the advocate of the dumb animal. His cheeks glowed with displeasure, and his lips murmured his impatience during my brief dialogue with the young tyrant.

'That is a sorry little ass, boy', I said; 'it seems to have scarcely any strength'.

'None at all; it is good for nothing.'

'It cannot get on; it can hardly stand; if any body could make it go, you would; you have taken great pains with it.'

'Yes, I have; but it is to no purpose!'

'It is of little use striking it, I think.'

'It is not worth beating; the stupid beast has got more wood now than it can carry; it can hardly stand, you see!'

'I suppose it put it upon its back itself?'

The boy was silent: I repeated the question.

'No; it has not sense enough for that', he replied with an incredulous leer.

By dint of repeated blows he had split one end of his cudgel, and the sound caused by the divided portion had alarmed Shelley's humanity: I pointed to it and said, 'You have split your stick; it is not good for much now.'

He turned it, and held the divided end in his hand.

'The other end is whole I see; but I suppose you could split that too on the ass's back if you chose; it is not so thick.'

'It is not so thick, but it is full of knots; it would take a great deal of trouble to split it, and the beast is not worth that; it would do no good!'

'It would do no good, certainly; and if any body saw you, he might say that you were a savage young ruffian, and that you ought to be served in the same manner yourself.'

The fellow looked at me with some surprise, and sank into sullen silence.

He presently threw his cudgel into the wood as far as he was able, and began to amuse himself by pelting the birds with pebbles, leaving my long-eared client to proceed at its own pace, having made up his mind, perhaps, to be beaten himself, when he reached home, by a tyrant still more unreasonable than himself, on account of the inevitable default of his ass.

Shelley was satisfied with the result of our conversation, and I repeated to him the history of the injudicious and unfortunate

interference of Don Quixote between the peasant, John Haldudo, and his servant, Andrew. Although he reluctantly admitted that the acrimony of humanity might often aggravate the sufferings of the oppressed by provoking the oppressor, I always observed that the impulse of generous indignation, on witnessing the infliction of pain, was too vivid to allow him to pause and consider the probable consequences of the abrupt interposition of the knight errantry, which would at once redress all grievances. Such exquisite sensibility and sympathy with suffering so acute and so uncontrolled may possibly be inconsistent with the calmness and forethought of the philosopher, but they accord well with the high temperature of a poet's blood.

As his port had the meekness of a maiden, so the heart of the young virgin who has never crossed her father's threshold to encounter the rude world, could not be more susceptible of all the sweet domestic charities than his: in this respect Shelley's disposition would happily illustrate the innocence and virginity of the Muses.

In most men, and especially in very young men, an excessive addiction to study tends to chill the heart, and to blunt the feelings, by engrossing the attention. Notwithstanding his extreme devotion to literature, and amidst his various and ardent speculations, he retained a most affectionate regard for his relations, and particularly for the females of his family; it was not without manifest joy that he received a letter from his mother, or his sisters.

A child of genius is seldom duly appreciated by the world during his life, least of all by his own kindred. The parents of a man of talent may claim the honour of having given him birth, yet they commonly enjoy but little of his society. Whilst we hang with delight over the immortal pages, we are apt to suppose that the gifted author was fondly cherished; that a possession so uncommon and so precious was highly prized; that his contemporaries anxiously watched his going out, and eagerly looked for his coming in; for we should ourselves have borne him tenderly in our hands, that he might not dash his foot against a stone. Surely such an one was given in charge to angels, we cry. On the contrary, Nature appears most unaccountably to slight a gift that she gave grudgingly; as if it were of small value, and easily replaced.

An unusual number of books, Greek or Latin classics, each inscribed with the name of the donor, which had been pre-

sented to him, according to the custom, on quitting Eton, attested that Shelley had been popular among his school-fellows. Many of them were then at Oxford, and they frequently called at his rooms : although he spoke of them with regard, he generally avoided their society, for it interfered with his beloved study, and interrupted the pursuits to which he ardently and entirely devoted himself.

In the nine centuries that elapsed from the time of our great founder, Alfred, to our days, there never was a student who more richly merited the favour and assistance of a learned body, or whose fruitful mind would have repaid with a larger harvest, the labour of careful and judicious cultivation. And such cultivation he was well entitled to receive. Nor did his scholar-like virtues merit neglect ; still less to be betrayed, like the young nobles of Falisci, by a traitorous school-master, to an enemy less generous than Camillus. No student ever read more assiduously. He was to be found, book in hand, at all hours ; reading in season and out of season ; at table, in bed, and especially during a walk ; not only in the quiet country, and in retired paths ; not only at Oxford, in the public walks, and High Street, but in the most crowded thoroughfares of London. Nor was he less absorbed by the volume that was open before him, in Cheapside, in Cranbourne Alley, or in Bond Street, than in a lonely lane, or a secluded library.

Sometimes a vulgar fellow would attempt to insult or annoy the eccentric student in passing. Shelley always avoided the malignant interruption by stepping aside with his vast and quiet agility.

Sometimes I have observed as an agreeable contrast to these wretched men, that persons of the humblest station have paused and gazed with respectful wonder as he advanced almost unconscious of the throng, stooping low, with bent knees and outstretched neck, poring earnestly over the volume, which he extended before him : for they knew this, although the simple people knew but little, that an ardent scholar is worthy of deference, and that the man of learning is necessarily the friend of humanity, and especially of the many. I never beheld eyes that devoured the pages more voraciously than his : I am convinced that two-thirds of the period of day and night were often employed in reading. It is no exaggeration to affirm, that out of the twenty-four hours, he frequently read sixteen. At Oxford, his diligence in this

respect was exemplary, but it greatly increased afterwards, and I sometimes thought that he carried it to a pernicious excess: I am sure, at least, that I was unable to keep pace with him.

On the evening of a wet day, when we had read with scarcely any intermission from an early hour in the morning, I have urged him to lay aside his book. It required some extravagance to rouse him to join heartily in conversation; to tempt him to avoid the chimney-piece, on which commonly he had laid the open volume.

'If I were to read as long as you read, Shelley, my hair and my teeth would be strewed about on the floor, and my eyes would slip down my cheeks into my waistcoat pockets; or at least I should become so weary and nervous that I should not know whether it were so or not.'

He began to scrape the carpet with his feet, as if teeth were actually lying upon it, and he looked fixedly at my face, and his lively fancy represented the empty sockets; his imagination was excited; and the spell that bound him to his books was broken, and, creeping close to the fire, and, as it were, under the fire-place, he commenced a most animated discourse. Few were aware of the extent, and still fewer, I apprehend, of the profundity of his reading; in his short life, and without ostentation, he had, in truth, read more Greek than many an aged pedant, who, with pompous parade, prides himself upon this study alone. Although he had not entered critically into the minute niceties of the noblest of languages, he was thoroughly conversant with the valuable matter it contains. A pocket edition of Plato, of Plutarch, of Euripides, without interpretation or notes, or of the Septuagint, was his ordinary companion; and he read the text straightforward for hours, if not as readily as an English author, at least with as much facility as French, Italian, or Spanish.

'Upon my soul, Shelley, your style of going through a Greek book is something quite beautiful!' was the wondering exclamation of one who was himself no mean student.

As his love of intellectual pursuits was vehement, and the vigour of his genius almost celestial, so were the purity and sanctity of his life most conspicuous.

His food was plain and simple as that of a hermit, with a certain anticipation, even at this time, of a vegetable diet, respecting which he afterwards became an enthusiast in theory, and in practice an irregular votary.

With his usual fondness for moving the abstruse and difficult questions of the highest theology, he loved to inquire, whether man can justify, on the ground of reason alone, the practice of taking the life of the inferior animals, except in the necessary defence of his life, and of his means of life, the fruits of that field which he has tilled, from violence, and spoliation.

'Not only have considerable sects', he would say, 'denied the right altogether, but those among the tender-hearted and imaginative people of antiquity, who accounted it lawful to kill and eat, appear to have doubted whether they might take away life merely for the use of man alone. They slew their cattle not simply for human guests, like the less scrupulous butchers of modern times, but only as a sacrifice, for the honour and in the name of the Deity; or rather of those subordinate divinities, to whom, as they believed, the Supreme Being had assigned the creation and conservation of the visible material world; as an incident to these pious offerings, they partook of the residue of the victims, of which, without such sanction and sanctification, they would not have presumed to taste. So reverent was the caution of humane and prudent antiquity!'

Bread became his chief sustenance, when his regimen attained to that austerity which afterwards distinguished it. He could have lived on bread alone without repining. When he was walking in London with an acquaintance, he would suddenly run into a baker's shop, purchase a supply, and breaking a loaf, he would offer half of it to his companion.

'Do you know', he said to me one day, with much surprise, 'that such an one does not like bread? Did you ever know a person who disliked bread?' and he told me that a friend had refused such an offer.

I explained to him, that the individual in question probably had no objection to bread in a moderate quantity, at a proper time and with the usual adjuncts, and was only unwilling to devour two or three pounds of dry bread in the streets, and at an early hour.

Shelley had no such scruple; his pockets were generally well-stored with bread. A circle upon the carpet, clearly defined by an ample verge of crumbs, often marked the place where he had long sat at his studies, his face nearly in contact with his book, greedily devouring bread at intervals amidst his profound abstractions. For the most part he took no condiment; sometimes, however, he ate with his bread the

common raisins which are used in making puddings, and these he would buy at little mean shops.

He was walking one day in London with a respectable solicitor, who occasionally transacted business for him ; with his accustomed precipitation he suddenly vanished, and as suddenly reappeared ; he had entered the shop of a little grocer in an obscure quarter, and had returned with some plums, which he held close under the attorney's nose, and the man of fact was as much astonished at the offer, as his client, the man of fancy, at the refusal.

The common fruit of stalls, and oranges and apples, were always welcome to Shelley ; he would crunch the latter as heartily as a schoolboy. Vegetables, and especially salads, and pies and puddings, were acceptable : his beverage consisted of copious and frequent draughts of cold water, but tea was ever grateful, cup after cup, and coffee. Wine was taken with singular moderation, commonly diluted largely with water, and for a long period he would abstain from it altogether ; he avoided the use of spirits almost invariably, and even in the most minute portions.

Like all persons of simple tastes, he retained his sweet tooth ; he would greedily eat cakes, gingerbread, and sugar ; honey, preserved or stewed fruit, with bread, were his favourite delicacies, these he thankfully and joyfully received from others, but he rarely sought for them, or provided them for himself. The restraint and protracted duration of a convivial meal were intolerable ; he was seldom able to keep his seat during the brief period assigned to an ordinary family dinner.

These particulars may seem trifling, if indeed anything can be little that has reference to a character truly great ; but they prove how much he was ashamed that his soul was in body, and illustrate the virgin abstinence of a mind equally favoured by the Muses, the Graces, and Philosophy. It is true, however, that his application at Oxford, although exemplary, was not so unremitting as it afterwards became ; nor was his diet, although singularly temperate, so meagre ; however, his mode of living already offered a foretaste of the studious seclusion and absolute renunciation of every luxurious indulgence which ennobled him a few years later.

Had a parent desired that his children should be exactly trained to an ascetic life, and should be taught by an eminent example to scorn delights and to live laborious days ; that they should behold a pattern of native innocence and genuine

simplicity of manners ; he would have consigned them to his house as to a temple, or to some primitive and still unsophisticated monastery.

It is an invidious thing to compose a perpetual panegyric, yet it is difficult to speak of Shelley, and impossible to speak justly, without often praising him ; it is difficult also to divest myself of later recollections ; to forget for a while what he became in days subsequent, and to remember only what he then was, when we were fellow-collegians. It is difficult, moreover, to view him with the mind which I then bore—with a young mind ; to lay aside the seriousness of old age ; for twenty years of assiduous study have induced, if not in the body, at least within, something of premature old age.

It now seems an incredible thing, and altogether inconceivable, when I consider the gravity of Shelley and his invincible repugnance to the comic, that the monkey tricks of the schoolboy could have still lingered, but it is certain that some slight vestiges still remained. The metaphysician of eighteen actually attempted once or twice to electrify the son of his scout, a boy like a sheep, by name James, who roared aloud with ludicrous and stupid terror, whenever Shelley affected to bring by stealth any part of his philosophical apparatus near to him.

As Shelley's health and strength were visibly augmented, if by accident he was obliged to accept a more generous diet than ordinary, and as his mind sometimes appeared to be exhausted by never ending toil, I often blamed his abstinence and his perpetual application. It is the office of an University, of a public institution for education, not only to apply the spur to the sluggish, but also to rein in the young steed, that, being too mettlesome, hastens with undue speed towards the goal.

'It is a very odd thing, but every woman can live with my lord and do just what she pleases with him, except my lady, Such was the shrewd remark, which a long familiarity taught an old and attached servant to utter respecting his master, a noble poet.

We may wonder in like manner, and deeply lament, that the most docile, the most facile, the most pliant, the most confiding creature, that ever was led through any of the various paths on earth ; that a tractable youth, who was conducted at pleasure by anybody that approached him—it might be occasionally by persons delegated by no legitimate authority—was never guided for a moment by those upon whom, fully and

without reservation, that most solemn and sacred obligation had been imposed, strengthened moreover by every public and private, official and personal, moral, political and religious tie, which the civil polity of a long succession of ages could accumulate. Had the University been in fact, as in name, a kind nursing mother to the most gifted of her sons ; to one, who seemed to those that knew him best

Heaven's exile straying from the orb of light ;

had that most awful responsibility, the right institution of those, to whom are to be consigned the government of the country and the conservation of whatever good human society has elaborated and excogitated, duly weighed upon the consciences of his instructors, they would have gained his entire confidence by frank kindness, they would have repressed his too eager impatience to master the sum of knowledge, they would have mitigated the rigorous austerity of his course of living, and they would have remitted the extreme tension of his soul by reconciling him to liberal mirth ; convincing him that, if life be not wholly a jest, there are at least many comic scenes occasionally interspersed in the great drama. Nor is the last benefit of trifling importance, for, as an unseemly and excessive gravity is usually the sign of a dull fellow, so is the prevalence of this defect the characteristic of an unlearned and illiberal age.

Shelley was actually offended, and indeed more indignant than would appear to be consistent with the singular mildness of his nature, at a coarse and awkward jest, especially if it were immodest, or uncleanly ; in the latter case his anger was unbounded, and his uneasiness pre-eminent ; he was, however, sometimes vehemently delighted by exquisite and delicate sallies, particularly with a fanciful, and perhaps somewhat fantastical, facetiousness—possibly the more because he was himself utterly incapable of pleasantry.

In every free state, in all countries that enjoy republican institutions, the view which each citizen takes of politics is an essential ingredient in the estimate of his ethical character. The wisdom of a very young man is but foolishness ; nevertheless, if we would rightly comprehend the moral and intellectual constitution of the youthful poet, it will be expedient to take into account the manner in which he was affected towards the grand political questions, at a period when the whole of the civilized world was agitated by a fierce storm of excitement,

that, happily for the peace and well-being of society, is of rare occurrence.

CHAPTER IV

ONE morning, a few days after I made Shelley's acquaintance, I was at his rooms, and we were reading together, two Etonians called on him, as they were wont to do ; they remained a short time conversing with him.

'Do you mean to be an Atheist here, too, Shelley ?' one of them inquired.

'No !' he answered, 'certainly not. There is no motive for it ; there would be no use in it ; they are very civil to us here ; they never interfere with us ; it is not like Eton.'

To this they both assented. When his visitors were gone, I asked him what they meant. He told me that at Eton he had been called Shelley the Atheist ; and he explained to me the true signification of the epithet. This is the substance of his explanation :

All persons who are familiar with public schools, are well aware that there is a set of nicknames, many of them denoting offices, as the Pope, the Bishop, the Major, the General, the Governor, and the like, and these are commonly filled by successive generations. At Eton, but at no other school, that I ever heard of, they had the name and office of Atheist ; but this usually was not full, it demanded extraordinary daring to attain to it ; it was commonly in commission, as it were, and the youths of the greatest hardihood might be considered as boys commissioners for executing the office of Lord High Atheist.

Shelley's predecessor had filled the office some years before his time ; he also was called Blank the Atheist, we must say, for I have forgotten his name. The act of Atheism, in virtue of which he obtained the title, was gross, flagrant, and downright.

A huge bunch of grapes, richly gilded, hung in front of 'The Christopher', as the sign, or in aid of the sign, of the inn. This the profane young wretch took down one dark winter's night, and suspended at the door of the head-master of his day. In the morning, when he rushed out in the twilight to go to chapel, being habitually too late, and always in a hurry, he ran full

butt against the bunch of grapes, which was at least as big as himself, a little man. From this it is evident that the word Atheist was used by the learned at Eton, not in a modern, but in an ancient and classical sense, meaning an Antitheist, rather than an Atheist ; for an opposer and contemner of the gods, not one who denies their existence.

Capaneus, Salmoneus, the Cyclops, and the other strong spirits of the olden time, were termed *ἄθεοι*, because they insulted and defied their deities ; not because they doubted, or denied, that they existed.

The gods of Eton were the authorities of the school ; nobody ever denied the existence of Old Keate, but many a lad of pluck did everything in his power to torment the old boy ; and amongst these Shelley was conspicuous ; he held the fulminating Jove in scorn, and despised his birchen thunderbolts.

It was for contumaciously setting the old tree on fire, of which we have spoken, that he first obtained the full title of Shelley the Atheist, which he held and enjoyed so long as he remained at school.

Two or three Eton boys called another day, and begged their former schoolfellow to curse his father and the king, as he used occasionally to do at school. Shelley refused, and for some time persisted in his refusal, saying that he had left it off ; but as they continued to urge him, by reason of their importunity he suddenly broke out, and delivered, with vehemence and animation, a string of execrations, greatly resembling in its absurdity a papal anathema ; the fulmination soon terminated in a hearty laugh, in which we all joined. When we were alone, I said :

‘ Why, you young reprobate, who in the world taught you to curse your father—your own father ? ’

‘ My grandfather, Sir Bysshe, partly ; but principally my friend, Dr. Lind, at Eton. When anything goes wrong at Field Place, my father does nothing but swear all day long afterwards. Whenever I have gone with my father to visit Sir Bysshe, he always received him with a tremendous oath, and continued to heap curses upon his head so long as he remained in the room.’

Sir Bysshe being Ogygian, gouty, and bed-ridden, the poor old baronet had become excessively testy and irritable ; and a request for money instantly aggravated and inflamed every symptom, moved his choler, and stirred up his bile, impelling

him irresistibly to alleviate his sufferings by the roundest oaths.

The grandson gave me some choice specimens of his grandfather's male and nervous eloquence in that peculiar department of oratory. Dr. Lind communicated to Shelley a taste for chemistry and chemical experiments, as has been before stated ; the mild, the amiable, the gentle Dr. Lind, also taught his young pupil how to deal damnation round the land.

Shelley invariably spoke with respect, regard, and gratitude of Dr. Lind, and of the injuries which the Doctor had received, whatever they might be, with indignant sympathy. He used to go to tea with the meek and benevolent physician at Eton ; and after tea they used to curse King George the Third, for the Doctor had really been, or firmly believed that he had been, cruelly wronged by that pious and domestic, but obstinate and impracticable, monarch.

After a light and digestible repast of tea—made by the daughter, or niece, of the Doctor, with a proper regard, doubtless, for the nervous system, and of bread and butter prepared upon sanatory principles, the butter being thinly superinduced upon bread, the stalest that could be procured, or of the same bread lightly toasted, and to be taken without any condiment—the execrations began.

After the salubrious meal, the good old Doctor proceeded solemnly to launch the greater excommunication against the father of his people, who, he thought, had acted like a stepfather to himself, and the rest joined in the condemnatory rite : in what precise form of words Miss Lind chimed in, I never heard. From cursing the father of his people, it was an easy and natural transition to curse his own natural father.

The diræ, as they were recited before me once, and once only, were of a peculiar character, differing much from ordinary execrations, and they operated, if at all, demoniacally, by devoting their object to the evil spirits and infernal gods ; whatever else might be the effect of these curses, they certainly did not shorten life, either in the case of the excommunicated monarch, or of his liege man, old Timotheus. The denunciations at Oxford were plainly a joke ; of the estimable, but angry Doctor's vehement scolding, without having heard him, it would be unfair to form any judgment. Shelley had a decided inclination for magic, demonology, incantations, raising the dead, evoking spirits and devils, seeing ghosts, and chatting familiarly with apparitions, which led him to interesting read-

ing, and curious and amusing investigations ; it is probable that he picked up, or improved, these medieval fancies at the physician's sober board. One thing at least is certain, the denial of the existence of gods, and devils, and spirits, if it was to be found in him at all, was only to be found in his words and arguments ; practically, his turn of mind was towards superstition, by no means towards irreligion and materialism.

FIELD PLACE, *Dec.* 20, 1810.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The moment which announces your residence, I write. There is now need of all my art ; I must resort to deception.

My father called on S. in London, who has converted him to sanctity. He mentioned my name, as a supporter of sceptical principles. My father wrote to me, and I am now surrounded, environed by dangers, to which compared the devils, who besieged St. Anthony, were all inefficient. They attack me for my detestable principles ; I am reckoned an outcast ; yet I defy them, and laugh at their ineffectual efforts.

S. will no longer do for me ; I am at a loss whom to select. S.'s skull is very thick, but I am afraid that he will not believe my assertion ; indeed, should it gain credit with him, should he accept the offer of publication, there exist numbers who will find out, or imagine, a real tendency ; and booksellers possess more power than we are aware of in impeding the sale of any book, containing opinions displeasing to them. I am disposed to offer it to Wilkie and Robinson, Paternoster Row, and to take it there myself ; they published Godwin's works, and it is scarcely possible to suppose that any one, layman or clergyman, will assert that these support Gospel doctrines. If that will not do, I must print it myself. Oxford, of course, would be most convenient for the correction of the press.

Mr. L.'s principles are not *very* severe ; he is more a votary to Mammon than God.

O ! I burn with impatience for the moment of the dissolution of intolerance ; it has injured me. I swear on the altar of perjured Love to revenge myself on the hated cause of the effect, which *even now* I can scarcely help deploring. Indeed, I think it is to the benefit of society to destroy the opinion which can annihilate the dearest of its ties. Inconveniences would now result from my *owning* the novel, which I have in preparation for the press. I give out, therefore, that I will publish no more ; every one here, but the select few who enter

into its schemes, believe my assertion. I will stab the wretch in secret. Let us hope that the wound which I inflict, though the dagger be concealed, will rankle in the heart of the adversary.

My father wished to withdraw me from college : I would not consent to it. There lowers a terrific tempest, but I stand, as it were, on a pharos, and smile exultingly at the vain beating of the billows below.

So much for egotism !

Your poetry pleases me very much ; the idea is beautiful, but I hope that the contrast is not from nature. The verses on the Dying Gladiator are good, but they seem composed in a hurry. I am composing a *satirical* poem ; I shall print it at Oxford, unless I find, on visiting him, that R. is ripe for printing whatever will sell. In case of that, he is my man.

It is not William Godwin, who lives in Holborn : it is *John*, no relation to the other.

As to W., I wrote to him when in London, by way of a gentle alterative. He promised to write to me when he had time, seemed surprised at what I said, yet directed to me as the Reverend : his amazement must be extreme.

I shall not read Bishop Prettyman, or any more of them, unless I have some particular reason. Bigots will not argue ; it destroys the very nature of the thing to argue ; it is contrary to *faith*. How, therefore, could you suppose that one of these *liberal* gentlemen would listen to scepticism, on the subject even of St. Athanasius's sweeping anathema ?

I have something else to tell you, and I will in another letter.

Love ! dearest, sweetest power ! how much are we indebted to thee ! How much superior are even thy miseries to the pleasures which arise from other sources ! How much superior to ' fat, contented ignorance ' is even the agony which thy votaries experience ! Yes, my friend, I am now convinced that a monarchy is the only form of government (in a certain degree) which a lover ought to live under. Yet in this alone is subordination necessary. *Man* is equal, and I am convinced that equality will be the attendant on a more advanced and ameliorated state of society. But this is assertion, not proof,—indeed, there can be none, then you will say, excuse my believing it ; willingly.

St. Irvyne is come out ; it is sent to you at Mr. Dayrell's ; you can get one in London by mentioning my name to Stockdale ; you need not state your own, and as names are not *now*

inscribed on the front of every existing creature, you run no risk of discovery in person, if it be a crime, or a sin, to procure my Novel.

How can you fancy that I shall ever think you mad ; am not I the wildest, the most delirious of enthusiasm's offspring ? On one subject I am cool, toleration ; yet that coolness alone possesses me that I may with more certainty guide the spear to the breast of my adversary, with more certainty ensanguine it with the heart's blood of Intolerance—hated name !

Adieu ! Down with Bigotry ! Down with Intolerance ! In this endeavour your most sincere friend will join his every power, his every feeble resource. Adieu !

To T. J. H.,
Lincoln's Inn Fields.

FIELD PLACE, Dec. -3, 1810.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The first desire which I felt on receiving your letters, was instantly to come to London, that a friend might sympathize in those sorrows, which are beyond alleviation. That I cannot do this week ; on Sunday or Monday next I will come, if you still remain in town.

Why will you add to the never dying remorse, which my egotizing folly has occasioned, for which, as long as its fatal effects remain, never can I forgive myself, by accusing yourself of a feeling, as intrusive, which I cannot but regard as another part of that amiability, which has marked your character since first I had the happiness of your friendship. Where exists the moral wrong of seeking the society of one, whom I loved ? what offence to reason, to virtue, was there in desiring the communication of a lengthened correspondence, in order that both, she and myself, might see, if by coincidence of intellect we were willing to enter into a closer, an eternal union ? No, it is no offence to reason, or virtue ; it is obeying its most imperious dictates, it is complying with the designs of the Author of our nature : can this be immorality ? Can it be selfishness, or interested ambition, to seek the happiness of the object of attachment ? I am sure, your own judgment, your own reason, must answer in the negative. Let me now ask you, what reason was there then for *despair*, even supposing my love to have been incurable ?

Her disposition was in all probability divested of the enthusiasm by which mine is characterized, could therefore hers be

prophetic? She might not be susceptible of that feeling which arises from an admiration of virtue, when abstracted from identity.

My sister attempted sometimes to plead my cause, but unsuccessfully. She said:

'Even supposing I take your representation of your brother's qualities and sentiments, which as you coincide in and admire, I may fairly imagine to be exaggerated, although *you* may not be aware of the exaggeration; what right have *I*, admitting that he is so superior, to enter into an intimacy, which must end in delusive disappointment, when he finds how really inferior I am to the being which his heated imagination has pictured.'

This was unanswerable, particularly as the prejudiced description of a sister, who loves her brother as she does, might, indeed *must*, have given to her an erroneously exalted idea of the superiority of my mental attainments.

You have said, that the philosophy, which I pursued, is not uncongenial with the strictest morality; you must see, that it militates with the received opinions of the world; that, therefore, does it offend; but prejudice and superstition, that superstitious bigotry, inspired by the system upon which at present the world acts, of believing all that we are told as incontrovertible facts.

I hope, that what I have said will induce you to allow me still, and all the more, to remain your friend.

I hope, that you will soon have an opportunity of seeing, of conversing, with Elizabeth.

How sorry I am that I cannot invite you here now. I will tell you the reason when we meet. Believe me, my dear friend, when I assert, that I shall *ever* continue so to you. I have reason to lament deeply the sorrows with which fate has marked my life; I am not so deeply debased by it, however, that the exertions for the happiness of my friend shall supersede considerations of narrower and selfish interests, but that his woes should claim a sigh before one repining thought arose at my own lot. I know the cause of all human disappointment—worldly prejudice; mine is the same, I know also its origin,—bigotry.

Adieu! Write again. Believe me your most sincere friend. Adieu!

P. B. S.

To T. J. H.,
Lincoln's Inn Fields.

FIELD PLACE, Dec. 26, 1810.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Why do you express yourself so flatteringly grateful to me, when I ought to experience that sensation towards you in the highest manner of which our nature is capable ? Why do you yet suppose, that you have offended against any of those rules for our conduct which we ought to regard with veneration ?

What is delicacy ? Come, I must be severe with myself, I must irritate the wound which I wish to heal.

Supposing the object of my affections does not regard me, how have you transgressed against its dictates ; in what have you offended ? What is delicacy ? Let us define it, in the light in which you take it. I conceive it to be that inherent repugnance to injuring others, particularly as regarding the objects of their dearer preference, which beings of superior intelligence feel. In what, then, let me ask again, if I do not think you culpable, in what, then, have you offended ? Tell me, then, my dear friend, no more of sorrow, no more of remorse, at what you have said. Circumstances have operated in such a manner, that the attainment of the object of my heart was impossible, whether on account of extraneous influences, or from a feeling which possessed her mind, which told her *not* to deceive another, not to give him the possibility of disappointment. I feel I touch the string which, if vibrated, excites acute pain, but *truth* and my real feelings, which I wish to give you a clear idea of, overcome my resolve never to speak on the subject again. It is with reluctance to my own feelings that I have entered into this cold disquisition, when your heart sympathizes so deeply in my affliction ; but for Heaven's sake consider, and do not criminate yourself, do not wrong the motives, which actuated you upon so feeble a ground as that of *delicacy*. I do this, I say this, in justice as well as friendship ; I demand that you should do *justice* to yourself, then no more is required to give you at all events a consciousness of rectitude.

I read most of your letters to my sister ; she frequently inquires after you, and we talk of you often. I do not wish to awaken her intellect too powerfully ; this must be my apology for not communicating all my speculations to her. Thanks, *truly* thanks for opening your heart to me, for telling me your feelings towards me. Dare I do the same to you ? I dare not to myself, how can I to another, perfect as he may

be? I dare not even to God, whose mercy is great. My unhappiness is excessive; but I will cease; I will no more speak in riddles, but now quit for *ever* a subject which awakens too powerful susceptibilities for even negative misery. But that which injured me shall perish! I even now by anticipation hear the expiring yell of intolerance! Pardon me! My sorrows are not so undeserved as you believe; they are obtrusive to narrate to myself; they must be so to you. Let me wish you an eternity of happiness! I wish you knew Elizabeth, she is a great consolation to me; but if all be well, my wishes on that score will soon be accomplished. On Monday night you will see me. I cannot bear to suffer alone. Adieu! I have scarce a moment's time, only to tell you how sincerely I am your friend.

To T. J. H.

Lincoln's Inn Fields, London.

FIELD PLACE, *Dec.* 28, 1810.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The encomium of one incapable of flattery is indeed flattering. Your discrimination of that chapter is more just than the praises which you bestow on so unconnected a thing as the romance taken collectively. I wish you very much to publish a tale; send one to a publisher. Oh, here we are in the midst of all the uncongenial jollities of Christmas, when you are compelled to contribute to the merriment of others—when you are compelled to live under the severest of all restraints, concealment of feelings pregnant enough in themselves, how terrible is your lot! I am learning abstraction, but I fear that my proficiency will be but trifling. I cannot, dare not, speak of myself. Why do you still continue to say, Do not despond, that you must not despair?

I admit that this despair would be unauthorized, when it was rational to suppose, that at some future time mutual knowledge would awaken reciprocity of feeling.

Your letter arrived at a moment when I could least bear any additional excitement of feelings. I have succeeded now in calming my mind, but at first I knew not how to act; indecision and a fear of injuring another, by complying with what perhaps were the real wishes of my bosom, distracted me. I do not tell you this by way of confession of my own state, for I believe that I may not be sufficiently aware of what I feel myself, even to own it to myself. Believe me, my

dear friend, that my only ultimate wishes *now* are for your happiness and that of my sisters. At present a thousand barriers oppose any more intimate connexion, any union with another, which, although unnatural and fettering to a virtuous mind, are nevertheless unconquerable.

I will, if possible, come to London on Monday, certainly some time next week. I shall come about six o'clock, and will remain with you until that time the next morning, when I will tell you my reasons for wishing to return. Adieu. Excuse the shortness of this, as the servant waits. I will write on Sunday.

Yours most sincerely.

To T. J. H., London.

FIELD PLACE, Jan. 2, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I cannot come to London before next week. I am but just returned to Field Place from an inefficient effort. Why do you, my happy friend, tell me of perfection in love? Is she not gone? And yet I breathe, I live! But adieu to egotism; I am sick to death at the name of *self*. Oh, your theory cost me much reflection; I have not ceased to think of it since your letter came, which was put into my hands at the moment of departure on Sunday morning. Is it not, however, founded on that *hateful* principle? Is it *self* which you propose to raise to a state of superiority by your system of eternal perfectibility in love? No? Were this frame rendered eternal, were the particles which compose it, both as to intellect and matter, indestructible, and then to undergo torments such as now we should shudder to think of even in a dream—to undergo this, I say, for the extension of happiness to those for whom we feel a vivid preference; then would I love, adore, idolize your theory—wild, unfounded as it might be: but no. I can conceive neither of these to be correct, considering matters in a philosophical light, it evidently appears (if it is not treason to speak thus coolly on a subject so deliriously ecstatic) that we were not destined for misery. What, then, shall happiness arise from? Can we hesitate? Love, dear love, and though every mental faculty is bewildered by the agony, which is in this life its too constant attendant, still is not that very agony to be preferred to the most thrilling sensualities of epicurism?

I have wandered in the snow, for I am cold, wet, and mad.

Pardon me, pardon my delirious egotism ; this really shall be the last. My sister is well ; I fear she is not quite happy on my account, but is much more cheerful than she was some days ago. I hope you will publish a tale ; I shall then give a copy to Elizabeth, unless *you* forbid it. I would do it not only to show her what your ideas are on the subject of works of imagination, and to interest her, but that she should see her brother's friend in a new point of view. When you examine her character, you will find humanity, not divinity, amiable as the former may sometimes be : however, I, a brother, must not write treason against my sister ; so I will check my volubility. Do not direct your next letter to Field Place, only to Horsham. Tomorrow I will write more connectedly.

Yours sincerely.

To T. J. H.,
Lincoln's Inn Fields, London.

FIELD PLACE, Jan. 3, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Before we deny or believe the existence of anything, it is necessary that we should have a tolerably clear idea of what it is. The word ' God ', a vague word, has been, and will continue to be, the source of numberless errors, until it is erased from the nomenclature of philosophy. Does it not imply ' the soul of the universe, the intelligent and *necessarily* beneficent, actuating principle '. This it is impossible not to believe in ; I may not be able to adduce proofs, but I think that the leaf of a tree, the meanest insect on which we trample, are, in themselves, arguments more conclusive than any which can be advanced, that some vast intellect animates infinity. If we disbelieve *this*, the strongest argument in support of the existence of a future state instantly becomes annihilated. I confess that I think Pope's

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,

something more than poetry. It has ever been my favourite theory, for the immoral soul, ' never to be able to die, never to escape from some shrine as chilling as the clay-formed dungeon, which now it inhabits ' ; it is the future punishment which I can most easily believe in.

Love, love, *infinite in extent*, eternal in duration, yet (allow-

ing your theory in that point) perfectible, should be the reward ; but can we suppose that this reward will arise, spontaneously, as a necessary appendage to our nature, or that our nature itself could be without cause—a first cause—a God ? When do we see effects arise without causes ? What causes are there without correspondent effects ? Yet here, I swear—and as I break my oaths, may Infinity, Eternity blast me—here I swear that never will I forgive intolerance ! It is the only point on which I allow myself to encourage revenge ; every moment shall be devoted to my object, which I can spare ; and let me hope that it will not be a blow which spends itself, and leaves the wretch at rest,—but lasting, long revenge ! I am convinced, too, that it is of great disservice to society—that it encourages prejudices, which strike at the root of the dearest, the tenderest, of its ties. Oh ! how I wish I were the avenger !—that it were mine to crush the demon ; to hurl him to his native hell, never to rise again, and thus to establish for ever perfect and universal toleration, I expect to gratify some of this insatiable feeling in poetry. You shall see—you shall hear—how it has injured me. She is no longer mine ! she abhors me as a sceptic, as what *she* was before ! Oh, bigotry ! When I pardon this last, this severest of thy persecutions, may Heaven (if there be wrath in Heaven) blast me ! Has vengeance, in its armoury of wrath, a punishment more dreadful ? Yet, forgive me, I have done ; and were it not for your great desire to know *why* I consider myself as the victim of severer anguish, that I could have entered into this brief recital.

I am afraid there is selfishness in the passion of love, for I cannot avoid feeling every instant as if my soul was bursting ; but I *will* feel no more ! It is selfish. I would feel for others, but for myself—oh ! how much rather would I expire in the struggle ! Yes, that were a relief ! Is suicide wrong ? I slept with a loaded pistol and some poison, last night, but did not die. I could not come on Monday, my sister would not part with me ; but I must—I will see you soon. My sister is now comparatively happy ; she has felt deeply for me. Had it not been for her—had it not been for a sense of what I owed to her, to *you*, I should have bidden you a final farewell some time ago. But can the dead feel ; dawns any day-beam on the night of dissolution ?

Pray publish your tale ; demand one hundred pounds for it from any publisher ;—he will give it in the event. It is

delightful, it is divine—not that I like your heroine—but the poor Mary is a character worthy of Heaven. I adore her !

Adieu, my dear friend. Your sincere,

P. B. S.

W—— has written. I have read his letter. It is too long to answer. I continue to dissipate Elizabeth's melancholy by keeping her, as much as possible, employed in poetry. You shall see some to-morrow. I cannot tell you when I can come to town. I wish it very much.

To T. J. H., London.

FIELD PLACE, Jan. 6, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dare I request *one* favour for *myself*—for my own sake ? not the keenest anguish which the most unrelenting tyrant could invent, should force me to request from you so great a sacrifice of friendship. It is a beloved sister's happiness which forces me to this. She saw me when I received your letter of yesterday. She saw the conflict of my soul. At first she said nothing ; and then she exclaimed, ' Redirect it, and send it instantly to the post ! ' Believe me, I feel far more than I will *allow* myself to express, for the cruel disappointments which I have undergone. Write to me whatever you wish to say ; you may say what you will on *other* subjects ; but on *that* I dare not even read what you would write. *Forget* her ? What would I not have given up to have been thus happy ? I thought I knew the means by which it might have been effected. Yet I consider what a female sacrifices when she returns the attachment even of one whose faith she supposes inviolable. Hard is the agony which is indescribable, which is only to be felt. Will she not encounter the opprobrium of the world ; and what is more severe (generally speaking) the dereliction and contempt of those who, before, had avowed themselves most attached to her ? I did not encourage the remotest suspicion. I was convinced of her truth, as I was of my own existence. Still was it not *natural* in her, even although she might return the most enthusiastic prepossessions arising from the consciousness of intellectual sympathy, ignorant, as she was, of *some* of my opinions, of my sensations (for *unlimited* confidence is requisite for the existence of mutual love) to have some doubts—some fears ? Besides, when in her natural character, her spirits are good, her conversation animated, and she was

almost, in consequence ignorant of the refinements in love, which can only be attained by solitary reflection. Forsake her ! Forsake one whom I loved ! Can I ? Never ! But she is gone—she is lost to me for ever ; for ever ! There is a mystery which I dare not to clear up ; it is the only point on which I will be reserved to you. I have tried the methods you would have recommended. I followed her. I would have followed her to the end of the earth, but—If you value the little happiness which yet remains, do not mention again to me, sorrows which, if you could share in, would wound a heart, which it now shall be my endeavour to heal of those pains which, through sympathy with me, it has already suffered. I will crush Intolerance. I will, at least, attempt it. To fail even in so useful an attempt were glorious !

I inclose some poetry :

Oh ! take the pure gem to where southerly breezes,
Waft repose to some bosom as faithful as fair,
In which the warm current of love never freezes,
As it rises unmingled with selfishness there,
Which, untainted by pride, unpolluted by care,
Might dissolve the dim icedrop, might bid it arise,
Too pure for these regions, to gleam in the skies.

Or where the stern warrior, his country defending,
Dares fearless the dark-rolling battle to pour,
Or o'er the fell corpse of a dread tyrant bending,
Where patriotism red with his guilt-reeking gore
Plants liberty's flag on the slave-peopled shore,
With victory's cry, with the shout of the free,
Let it fly, taintless spirit, to mingle with thee.

For I found the pure gem, when the daybeam returning,
Ineffectual gleams on the snow-covered plain,
When to others the wished-for arrival of morning
Brings relief to long visions of soul-racking pain ;
But regret is an insult—to grieve is in vain :
And why should we grieve that a spirit so fair
Seeks Heaven to mix with its own kindred there ?

But still 'twas some spirit of kindness descending
To share in the load of mortality's woe,
Who over thy lowly-built sepulchre bending
Bade sympathy's tenderest tear-drop to flow.
Not for *thee*, soft compassion, celestials did know,
But if *angels* can weep, sure *man* may repine,
May weep in mute grief o'er thy low-laid shrine.

And did I then say, for the altar of glory,
 That the earliest, the loveliest of flowers I'd entwine,
 Tho' with millions of blood-reeking victims 'twas gory,
 Tho' the tears of the widow polluted its shrine,
 Tho' around it the orphans, the fatherless pine?
 Oh! Fame, all thy glories I'd yield for a tear
 To shed on the grave of a heart so sincere.

I am very cold this morning, so you must excuse bad writing, as I have been most of the night pacing a churchyard. I must now engage in scenes of strong interest.

You see the subject of the foregoing. I send it, because it may amuse you. Your letter has just arrived; I will send W——'s to University, when I can collect them. If it amuses you, you can answer him; if not, I will.

I will consider your argument against the Non-existence of a Deity. Do you allow, that some *supernatural* power actuates the organization of physical causes? It is evident so far as this, that if *power* and *wisdom* are employed in the continual arrangement of these affairs, that this power, etc., is something out of the comprehension of man, as he now exists; at least if we allow, that the soul is *not* matter. Then, admitting that this actuating principle is such as I have described, admitting it to be finite, there must be something beyond this, which influences *its* actions and all this series advancing, as if it does in one instance, it must to infinity, must at last terminate, if it can terminate, in the existence, which may be called a Deity. And *if* this Deity thus influences the actions of the Spirits (if I may be allowed the expression), which take care of minor events (supposing your theory to be true), why is it *not* the soul of the Universe; in what is it not analogous to the soul of man? Why *too* is *not* gravitation the soul of a clock? I entertain no doubt of the fact, although it possesses no capabilities of variation; if the principle of life (that of reason put out of the question, as in the cases of dogs, horses, and oysters) be *soul*, then gravitation is as much the soul of a clock, as animation is that of an oyster. I think we may not inaptly define *Soul*, as the most supreme, superior, and distinguished abstract appendage to the nature of anything.

But I will write again: my head is rather dizzy to-day, on account of not taking rest, and a slight attack of typhus. Adieu! I will write soon.

Your sincerest,

To T. J. H.,
 University College, Oxford.

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

FIELD PLACE, Jan. 11, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I will not now consider your little Essay, which arrived this morning; I wait till to-morrow. It coincides exactly with Elizabeth's sentiments on the subject, to whom I read it: indeed it has convinced her, although from my having a great deal to do to-day, I cannot listen to so full an exposition of her sentiments on the subject, as I would wish to send you. I shall write to you to-morrow on this matter; and if you clear up some doubts, which yet remain, dissipate some hopes relative to the perfectibility of man generally considered, as well as individually, I will willingly submit to the system, which at present I cannot but strongly reprobate.

How can I find words to express my thanks for such generous conduct with regard to my sister with talents and attainments, such as you possess, to promise what I ought not perhaps to have required, what nothing but a dear sister's intellectual improvement could have induced me to demand. What can I say on the subject of your letter concerning Elizabeth? is it not dictated by the most generous and disinterested of human motives? I have not shown it to her yet, I need not explain the reason. On this point you know all.

There is only one affair, of which I will make the least cloud of mystery; it is the only point on which I will be a solitary being! To be solitary, to be reserved in communicating pain, surely cannot be criminal; it cannot be contrary to the strictest duties of friendship.

She is gone! She is lost to me for ever! She is married! Married to a clod of earth; she will become as insensible herself; all those fine capabilities will moulder!

Let us speak no more on the subject. Do not deprive me of the little remains of peace, which yet linger; that which arises from endeavours to make others happy!

The Poetry, which I sent you, alluded not to the subject of my nonsensical ravings. I hope that you are now publishing one of your tales. L—— would do it, as well as any one; if you do not choose to publish a book at Oxford, you can print it there; and I will *engage* to dispose of five hundred copies. S—— professes to be acquainted with your family; *hinc illæ lacrymæ!* I attempted to enlighten my father, *mirabile dictu!* He for a time listened to my arguments; he allowed the impossibility (considered abstractedly) of any preternatural interferences by Providence. He allowed the utter incredi-

bility of witches, ghosts, legendary miracles. But when I came to *apply* the truths, on which we had agreed so harmoniously, he started at the bare idea of some facts generally believed, never having existed, and silenced me with an Equine argument, in effect with these words:—‘I believe, because I do believe.’

My mother imagines me to be in the high road to Pandemonium, she fancies I want to make a deistical coterie of all my little sisters : how laughable !

You must be very solitary at Oxford ; I wish I could come there now ; but for reasons, which I will tell you at meeting, it is delayed for a fortnight. I have a Poem with Mr. L——, which I shall certainly publish ; there is some of Elizabeth’s in it. I will write to-morrow. I have something to add to it, and if L—— has any idea, when he speaks to you of publishing it with my name, will you tell him to leave it alone till I come ?

Yes ! the arms of Britannia victorious are bearing
Fame, triumph, and glory, wherever they speed,
Her Lion his crest o’er the nations is rearing.
Ruin follows, it tramples the dying and dead,
Thy countrymen fall, the blood-reeking bed
Of the battle-slain sends a complaint-breathing sigh,
It is mixed with the shoutings of Victory.

Old Ocean to shrieks of despair is resounding,
It washes the terror-struck nations with gore,
Wild Horror the fear-palsied earth is astounding,
And murmurs of fate fright the dread-convulsed shore.
The Andes in sympathy start at the roar,
Vast Ætna, alarmed, leans his flame-glowing brow,
And huge Teneriffe stoops with his pinnacled snow.

The ice mountains echo, the Baltic, the Ocean,
Where Cold sits enthroned on his column of snows,
Even Spitzbergen perceives the terrific commotion,
The roar floats on the whirlwind of sleet, as this blows
Blood tinges the streams as half-frozen they flow,
The meteors of war lurid flame thro’ the air,
They mix their bright gleam with the red polar star.

All are brethren, and even the African bending
To the stroke of the hard-hearted Englishman’s rod,
The courtier at Luxury’s palace attending,
The senator trembling at Tyranny’s nod,
Each nation which kneels at the footstool of God,
All are brethren—then banish distinction afar,
Let Concord and Love heal the miseries of War !

These are Elizabeth’s. She has written many more, and I

will show you at some future time the whole of the composition. I like it very much, if a brother may be allowed to praise a sister. I will write to-morrow.

Yours with affection,

P. B. S.

Can you read this ?

To T. J. H.,
University College, Oxford.

FIELD PLACE, *Jan.* 12, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter with the extremely beautiful enclosed poetry came this morning. It is really admirable ; it touches the heart ; but I must be allowed to offer *one* critique upon it. You will be surprised to hear that I think it unfinished. You have not said, that 'the ivy, after it had destroyed the oak, as if to mock the miseries, which it caused, twined around a pine which stood near.' It is true, therefore, but does not comprehend the whole truth. As to the stuff which I sent you, I write all my poetry of that kind from the feelings of the moment ; if therefore it neither has allusion to the sentiments which rationally might be supposed to possess me, or to those which my situation might awaken, it is another proof of that egotizing variability, whilst I shudder to reflect how much I am in its power. To *you* I dare represent myself as I am : wretched to the last degree—sometimes one gleam of hope, one faint solitary gleam, seems to illumine the darkened prospect before me—but it has vanished. I fear it will never return. My sister will, I fear, never return the attachment which would once again bid me be calm. Yes ! In this alone is my feeble anticipation of peace placed ! But what am I ? Am I not the most degraded of deceived enthusiasts ? Do I not deceive myself ? I never, never can feel peace again. What necessity is there for continuing in existence ? But Heaven ! Eternity ! Love ! My dear friend, I am yet a sceptic on these subjects ; would that I could believe them to be, as they are represented ; would that I could totally disbelieve them ! But no ! That would be selfish. I still have firmness enough to resist this last, this most horrible of errors. Is my despair the result of the hot, sickly love which inflames the admirers of Sterne or Moore ? It is the conviction of unmerited unkindness, the conviction that, should a future

world exist, the object of my attachment would be as miserable as myself, is the cause of it.

I here take God (and a God exists) to witness, that I wish torments, which beggar the futile description of a fancied hell, would fall upon me; provided I could obtain thereby that happiness for *what* I love, which, I fear, can never be! The question is, what do I love? It is almost unnecessary to answer. Do I love the person, the embodied identity, if I may be allowed the expression? No! I love what is superior, what is excellent, or what I conceive to be so; and I wish, ardently wish, to be profoundly convinced of the existence of a Deity, that so superior a spirit might derive some degree of happiness from my feeble exertions: for love is heaven, and heaven is love. You think so, too, and you disbelieve not the existence of an eternal, omnipresent Spirit. Am I not mad? Alas! I am, but I pour out my ravings into the ear of a friend who will pardon them. Stay! I have an idea. I think I can prove the existence of a Deity—A First Cause. I will ask a materialist, how came this universe at first? He will answer, By chance. What chance? I will answer in the words of Spinoza: 'An infinite number of atoms had been floating from all eternity in space, till at last one of them fortuitously diverged from its track, which, dragging with it another, formed the principle of gravitation, and in consequence the universe'. What cause produced this change, this chance? For where do we know that causes arise without their correspondent effects; at least we must here, on so abstract a subject, reason analogically. Was not this then a *cause*, was it not a *first* cause? Was not this first cause a Deity? Now nothing remains but to prove, that this Deity has a care, or rather that its only employment consists in regulating the present and future happiness of its creation. Our ideas of infinite space, etc., are scarcely to be called ideas, for we cannot either comprehend or explain them; therefore the Deity must be judged by us from attributes analogical to our situation. Oh, that this Deity were the soul of the universe, the spirit of universal, imperishable love! Indeed I believe it is: but now to your argument of the necessity of Christianity. I am not sure that your argument does not tend to prove its unreality. If it does not, you allow, you say, that love is the only true source of rational happiness: *one* man is capable of it, why not all?

The callibility of man preterite, I allow, but because men are,

and have been callible, I see no reason why they should always continue so. Have there not been fluctuations in the opinions of mankind ; and as the *stuff*, which soul is made of, must be in every one the same, would not an extended system of rational and moral unprejudiced education, render each individual capable of experiencing that degree of happiness, to which each ought to aspire, more for others, than self ? Hideous, hated traits of Superstition. Oh ! Bigots, how I abhor your influence ; they are all bad enough—but do we not see Fanaticism decaying ? is not its influence weakened, except where Faber, Rowland Hill, and several others of the Armageddon heroes maintain their posts with all the obstinacy of long-established dogmatism ? How I pity them ; how I despise, hate them ! S. knows Mr. D. would publish your tale. I am beyond measure anxious for its appearance. Adieu ! Excuse my mad arguments ; they are none at all, for I am rather confused, and fear, in consequence of a fever, they will not allow me to come on the 26th, but I will. Adieu !

Your affectionate friend,

P. B. S.

You can inclose to Timothy Shelley, Esq., M.P.

To T. J. H.,

University College, Oxford.

Jan. 14, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter and that of W—— came to-day ; yours is excellent, and, I think, will fully (in his own mind) convince Mr. W——. I inclosed five sheets of paper full this morning, and sent them to the coach with yours. I sate up all night to finish them ; they attack his hypothesis in its very basis, which, at some future time, I will explain to you ; and I have attempted to prove, from the *existence* of a Deity and of Revelation, the futility of the superstition upon which he founds his whole scheme.

I am sorry to see that you even remotely suspected me of being offended with you. How I wish that I could persuade you that it is impossible ! I am really sleepy ; could you suppose that I should be so apathetic as *ever* to sleep again till my last slumber ? But it is so, and I shall take a walk in St. Leonard's Forest to dissipate it. Adieu ! You shall hear from me to-morrow.

Your sincere friend,

P. B. S.

S—— has behaved infamously to me: he has abused the confidence I reposed in him in sending him my work; and he has made very free with your character, of which he knows nothing, with my father. I shall call on S—— in my way, that he may explain. May I expect to see your Tale printed?

To T. J. H.,
University College, Oxford.

CHAPTER V

THE long vacation is an admirable and blessed institution, worthy of all honour and of perpetual observance; but the short vacations at Christmas and at Easter deserve utter execration, and exist only to be abolished. They are a pernicious interruption of the course of study, which is broken off almost as soon as it is fully begun, and an unseasonable disruption of studious friendships and agreeable society. If they were tolerable to young men, whose families reside at a moderate distance from the University, they were insupportable to those unfortunates who must travel by coaches, perhaps two whole days, and certainly two nights, to reach their household gods, and for the like space of time to return to College. All lectures, all instruction ceased, public libraries and every other place of amusement or resort were closed during these ferial days, even the entertainment of attending chapel was denied. The tutors departed, as well as all the under-graduates; the porter and the master shut themselves up closely in their respective lodges; and the College servants could seldom be found. A dinner was provided certainly, but not in the Hall; the inhospitable table was spread in some mysterious apartment, which I never entered at any other time, and which seemed to have vanished as soon as term recommenced, so that I have sometimes wondered what became of it. At the dinner I commonly found myself alone. It consisted of a joint of meat, potatoes, and bread; all very good of their kind, no doubt; but it was impossible to obtain anything else—any of those little extras for which one might *battel* in term time; the very cheese suffered dim eclipse, not a slice was to be procured. The College cook, in truth, would have

felt that he was unworthy of his important office if he had approved himself less lazy than the master and tutors.

Many and great reforms were needed at our famous University in those days, which were far more pressing and urgent than the discouragement of metaphysical speculations in the active minds of a few studious youths.

It was manifest that my presence in the vacant seat of learning was unwelcome. To travel to the north of England, to rest myself for a few days there after my journey, and then to come back in the dark, as it were, in an ungenial season and the shortest days, was too severe a sacrifice to be made even to the grossest abuse of educational trusts ; so I determined to go to London.

London is a delightful place at all times ; always full of instruction for those who are disposed to seek it ; but, for a stranger to live, like a gentleman, at a hotel in London is expensive. After ten days or a fortnight, it was prudent to return to Oxford.

At the beginning of January, 1811, the weather was intensely cold ; there was a severe frost, and the ground was thickly covered with snow. I studied alone, until I could study no more ; I read until I was weary and cold. Oh ! so cold ! A youth of eighteen cannot warm himself by sitting over the fire ; to thaw my blood by parading the solitary streets of the deserted city, or the lonely frozen public walks, was uninviting, and, indeed, impracticable. I was at all times well inclined for a pedestrian tour, and I now resolved to undertake one ; accordingly I took counsel with myself, and planned it. Stonehenge, of which I had read so much and such strange things, and the two glorious cathedrals of Salisbury and Winchester, of which I had seen several views in sundry rooms at Oxford and elsewhere, were more tempting than any other objects within the reach of a walk, and I made up my mind to visit the three wonderful temples. One morning, therefore, at the beginning of January, I equipped myself, as for the chase, with strong shooting shoes and gaiters, taking no more luggage than the pockets of a shooting-jacket would contain, and, after an early breakfast, I sallied forth. My travelling library consisted of 'P. Virgili Maronis Bucolica, Georgica, et Æneis, ad optimorum exemplarium fidem recensita. 12mo. Edinburgi et Glasguæ, 1796.'

This verse abundantly testifies that the recension on the faith of the best copies was a reprint of Heyne's text. I crossed the frozen Isis, and entered Berkshire, and I took my lonely way through Bagley Wood to Abingdon; with this portion of my journey I was already familiar. I then entered upon new ground, and proceeded, if I mistake not, through Islip, by fields covered with snow—ploughed lands, for the most part, and uninclosed; a district altogether without interest; a vast solitude, for I scarcely met a human being all day.

When the short day closed in, which, however, was somewhat lengthened, and lighted by the reflection of the bright snow, I began to look out for a resting-place, and I came at last to an ancient, solitary, decaying inn, which I entered. There seemed to be no male creature there, at least I saw none during my stay. I found only two stale women; a stale middle-aged woman, who acted as waiter and chambermaid, and an older and still staler woman, the landlady; they were equally sullen, slow, and stupid.

The wanderer, Ulysses, was welcomed so far by Calypso and her attendant nymph that he was not actually turned out of doors by them; dinner and a bed were not absolutely denied him. After a long sojourn in a cold, gloomy room, by the side of a half-lighted fire, dinner was served. Those were wonderful days for inns, especially in the matter of steaks and chops. It is wonderful how they could procure beef and mutton, so tough, and at the same time, not over fresh; how they could make the article so black and greasy, and utterly uneatable, be the appetite what it might! Such viands the stale hand-maid put upon the table, with raw potatoes, muddy beer, stinking cheese, and wine that might be paid for, but not drunken. The hope of tea was the sole remaining consolation; it was a great one, and seemed all-sufficient. Wiltshire and Berkshire, according to my subsequent experience, are two starving counties, and the common people are mere clods. As much virtue as there is in chopped straw, so much was there in this tea, and no more. No milk could be had, as I have often found to be the case in Berkshire; but there was a huge, indurated loaf, and salt butter such as it was.

Nothing remained but to go to bed. The stale chambermaid conducted me upstairs to a large, old, cold room; the fire below did not induce me to require one above, but I ventured to ask to have my bed warmed. The stale woman hesitated, but finally consented. She withdrew, and, after

a long reluctant delay, returned, and began her genial office. If she was long in beginning, she was still longer in ending; it seemed as if she had taken root in the floor, and would have remained for ever fixed at the foot of the bed. But her tardiness in this instance was beneficial; and, when I was allowed at last to get into bed, I soon felt a warmth which I had not supposed so grim a wench could have imparted. Breakfast was a repetition of tea: eggs there were none; bacon was ignored; there were steaks and chops: these had been tried before. The name of the place, where the staring, solitary, old inn stood, the stale women would not or could not tell me. I paid my score, and departed, having fulfilled my destinies. It seemed indeed as though the whole course of hospitality had been guided by destiny, and that the hotel was kept by two of the Fates, by the two survivors, the third having died of cold and hunger. A walk of an hour or two brought me to Hungerford, a hungry-looking place, where nothing tempted me to tarry. I continued my journey over a vast plain, not a dead level, not absolutely flat, but gently undulating, and covered with snow, white, bright, and shining. It was less unsatisfactory than the landscape of the day before, for it did not affect to be anything else than what it was—a vacuum, mere space, empty space. I continued my solitary ramble; I quitted Berkshire at what point I know not, and I got into Wiltshire. After a time I reached Amesbury, which seemed, notwithstanding a thick covering of snow, a pleasant spot; a fruitful oasis in the midst of a desert. It was the first place I met with since I left Oxford, where I would willingly have remained; to be made Duke of Queensbury, or at least to have inhabited his beautiful mansion, would have been an offer not lightly to have been rejected. I was here told how to find my way to the first object of my tour, to the first of the three famous temples, to the Pagan, the Celtic temple: it was only two or three miles distant.

I readily found the celebrated Stonchenge; like everything else, it was deeply imbedded in snow. The snow lay thick upon the few transverse stones which still remained in their original position, and upon all the large stones that had been thrown down, and were scattered on the hard frozen ground. It is a wonderful monument of a most remote and unknown antiquity; but I could not think that there was much to be seen there. Many sheep had found shelter amongst these ruins, and they were attended by two or three shepherds. I

remembered, that when I was a child, I had read with pleasure some tale of the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain ; here he was then, I had found him at last ! The shepherds were very civil to me ; they seemed deeply impressed with the importance of the locality, and explained various matters to me. A professed antiquary could not have told the wondrous tale better, perhaps not so well. They expressed much regret that my first visit to the scene, which they esteemed so highly, had been made in deep snow, for I saw it then to great disadvantage ; I should have seen it far better if the ground had been clear. One of them made a remark which I never heard before or since ; nor have I ever found it in any book, viz., that the huge stones are not real native stones, but a composition. And he took much pains to show me that they had no grain, no veins, no layers ; and he gave me at parting a piece which he had himself broken off, and he pointed out the stone from which he had taken it, fitting it into its place exactly. This fragment had rather the appearance certainly of Roman cement than of stone ; perhaps it was more like a volcanic substance called tufa, with which I long afterwards became familiar at Rome and at Naples. The good shepherds pointed out the road to Salisbury, and told me, when I should see the tall spire before me ; the distance, if I remember right, they said was six miles.

I followed the shepherds' direction and my solitary journey. It was dusk when I arrived at the city of Salisbury. The West of England in those days was renowned for the badness of its inns, and Salisbury did not lessen this evil repute : I found there every possible discomfort. Next morning, as early as the short days would permit, I repaired to the second object of my pilgrimage, the beautiful cathedral. The Close, like the rest of the diocese, was at that time overspread with snow. I have seen it more than once afterwards a green lawn with venerable trees in full leaf. Our marvellous old churches are commonly blocked up on every side with mean, squalid, ugly buildings. It was agreeable to find a large open space, to see that the exquisite edifice was clear on all sides, and to examine the exterior from different points of view. As such structures are always, but never ought to be, it was fast locked up. But when I was trying in vain to open the fastened doors, a middle-aged man appeared, and unlocked the wicket. I entered and walked slowly round ; the interior, as such edifices too commonly are, was in a state of dirty neglect ; but the

glories of the purest lancet style of Gothic architecture might be dimmed and obscured but not quenched by the stupid indifference of a Dean and his Chapter, a chapter of accidents—of most untoward accidents.

My guide was not by any means such a sullen brute as a verger usually is ; on the contrary, he was obliging and patient. He appeared to sympathize with my intense admiration of the lovely building, of which he had the charge, and instead of hurrying me over the church, and abruptly turning me out before I had half seen it, he permitted me to return to some objects which I desired to look at a second time ; and his manner almost invited me to stay. He was, I think, the only functionary of the kind to whom I ever gave half-a-crown without grudging it. A curious traveller has undoubtedly as much right to contemplate at his leisure the inside of a public building gratuitously, as he has to look up at the face of the cathedral clock ; and to be shut out is scarcely less offensive than it would be for some officer of the ecclesiastical corporation to march up to a stranger, and, placing his hand over his eyes, to say, ' Unless you will give me one shilling at least, and as much more as you please, you shall not know what time it is—such are the orders of Mr. Dean.'

The refined delight which I experienced in admiring the wonders of art was seriously interrupted by a very gross and vulgar consideration ; my shooting-shoes were already beginning to fail me, the sharp ice and the hard frozen roads had told severely upon them. It would have been easy enough to have bought a new pair of strong shoes at Salisbury, but it would be by no means easy to walk back to Oxford in them by way of Winchester. My only course was to try to get them repaired. Accordingly, having quitted my dirty, dreary inn, I looked out for a shoemaker ; I soon found one, and I entered the shop of a humble cobbler. I told him what I wanted. He looked at my shoes, and soon re-assured me by promising, in an hour or less, to put them in good order.

' A few *parables* will do it.'

I thought the man said *parables*. I had heard much of instruction being conveyed by parables, but I wondered not a little how shoes could be repaired by parables, parallelisms, or proverbs. The venerable man took off my shoes, put them on his lasts, and proceeded to knock a number of small nails into the soles—nails of a peculiar form. I took up one of the nails.

'Are these what you call parables? It is a remarkable name, why do you call them so?'

'Because they are like the beak of a bird—of a sparrow; that is why they are always called sparrow-bills.'

The job was soon done, and the shoes put on again. He hoped that I would not consider sixpence unreasonable; he had put nearly sixpennyworth of sparrow-bills into them, to say nothing of the work. I did not think the demand unreasonable; and the old man and his old wife pointed out the road to Winchester. It lay through a pleasant valley, all white with snow, the roads being frozen as hard as ever. It was not a long walk, I know not how long, but, having spent much time at Salisbury, I reached Winchester in the dark. I had quitted Wiltshire, at what point I could not tell, and entered Hampshire for the first time; where I passed the boundary of the two counties I knew not. I put up at a spacious, cold, dull inn, which did not derogate from the well-founded pretensions of the West of England. I was treated with condescending kindness by a pompous old waiter, who used towards me a certain slow, cumbrous, ponderous, officious civility; but the place was thoroughly uncomfortable. After an especially nasty dinner, I wrote a long letter to Field Place, describing my pedestrian tour. I was desirous, next day, to make my escape as soon as possible; but this was not to be affected readily; however, after long delays, having at last obtained breakfast and my bill from the dignified lord high chamberlain of the dreary establishment, I betook myself to the third and last object of my liberal curiosity—the very ancient and most majestic cathedral.

I stood for some time viewing with admiration the prodigious length of the church, and the sober grandeur of the exterior, when the bells began to ring for the morning service. The doors were opened, and I entered. I wandered about in every direction, and found no interruption, except so far as black looks were an interruption, for some persons eyed me with jealousy, as if they thought that I was stealing a march upon them. I will not describe what has been already often described, so far, indeed, as it is capable of description. The morning service had begun. I went into the choir and heard a part of it. But, recollecting that I had seen all the three objects of my winter-walk, the two Christian and one Druidical temples, nothing now remained but to walk back to Oxford, and that I ought not to lose time, but make the best of my



way thither, I quitted the last of the three venerable temples, and not the least venerable of them, with regret ; and I am sorry to add that I have never seen it since, save from the window of a carriage, lately, on the Southampton Railway. I left the noble old pile, and turned my face to the north. The day was intensely cold, raw, and foggy ; I inquired for the road to Newbury, and I pursued it, walking fast to warm myself. After a while the frost began to give, and walking became slippery and unpleasant.

I found nothing remarkable in my way ; the country was less bare, desolate, and hedgeless, than on the road from Oxford to Salisbury. In the afternoon a young farmer joined me, walking by my side ; he was a modest, ingenuous youth, with whom there could be no need of concealment ; so I told him my story, a simple story enough. He cheered me by the information that I should find good accommodation at Newbury, and communicated the sign of the inn where it was to be had. He halted at the door of a farm-house. ' I live here ', he said ; ' we are going to tea, step in and take it with us ; you must want something ! '

We entered a kitchen where there was a blazing fire, the father and mother, old people, and two or three female servants ; in a snug corner by the fire there sat, in a suit of rusty black, an itinerant Methodist preacher. The good people gave me tea in the olden fashion, in exceedingly small cups, very sweet, very weak, and intensely hot, as weak tea invariably is ; and thick bread and butter. The humble entertainment was infinitely refreshing.

On hearing that I belonged to the University of Oxford, for which they appeared to feel the most profound reverence, the old people asked me a number of questions, and very sensible and pertinent ones, respecting it. The good folks at the farm-house could enter into the feelings that led me forth to wander to the three vast and famous temples, and to undergo great fatigue, and take much trouble for such an object. They could comprehend also, which, for the most part, persons of higher station and superior education could not—how with augmented curiosity and interest, with long accumulated feelings of reverence, these famous structures are slowly, and perhaps painfully, approached on foot ; and how different a thing it is to drive to them easily and rapidly in a post-chaise or mailcoach.

When I rose to depart, and acknowledged their hospitality,

they thanked me for my condescension ; and the preacher, who had not spoken before, but had employed himself in putting away a large store of bread and butter, said, ' It is good to exercise hospitality, for some unawares have entertained angels ! ' The good-natured young farmer walked by the side of the angel of the Church of Oxford some two miles, through the slush, for the thaw was extremely rapid. At parting he said, if I rightly remember, ' It is now three miles to Newbury '.

My progress was slow and painful, and it was quite dark when I entered Newbury. I was guided to the inn which the farmer's son had recommended, and I found there warmth, cleanliness, civility, good cheer, and every comfort, rendered still more agreeable by the force of contrast, all which I greatly needed ; for I had walked, and walked hard, in very severe weather for four long days, and I was literally perishing with cold, hunger, and fatigue.

The walk to Abingdon, next day, was horrible ; the thaw continued, and the roads were broken up ; the poor sparrow-bills were as tired of it as myself, and began to give way, so that iced water and melting snow found a passage into my shoes. At Abingdon, a nasty little girl gave me some nasty tea in a nasty cold room. After my scurvy meal, I ploughed on through liquid mud and liquefying snow with intolerable labour. It was dark long before I reached Oxford, and when I got to University College, the kitchen and buttery were closed, and the college-servants had gone home for the night, taking the keys of my rooms with them. However, the solemn old porter, with some trouble, contrived to open the spring lock of the outer door, with the thin blade of an old table-knife, and I was thus enabled to do one thing, which was, in fact, under the present circumstances, everything, to get rid of the wet gaiters, stockings, and shoes, with all their sparrow-bills, and to creep into bed. Such was my pilgrimage to the three great Western Temples.

I had satisfied my curiosity, and, moreover, I had taken away—for the first few days, it seemed, for ever—my desire of walking. To sit before the fire and read, appeared to be the summit of human felicity ! The first-fruits of my sitting still, and of this strong disinclination ever to go out of the college-gates again, were to read the *Going-up of Cyrus*. The *Anabasis* of Xenophon was a book deservedly in high repute at Oxford. I perused it very carefully, with the lexicon and atlas by my

side, for the first time, with unspeakable gratification, and endless, abiding profit.

[No date.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You are all over the country. I shall be at Oxford on Friday or Saturday evening. I will write to you from London. My father's prophetic prepossession in your favour is become as high as before it was to your prejudice. Whence it arises, or from what cause, I am inadequate to say; I can merely state the fact. He came from London full of your praises; your family, that of Mr. Hogg, of Norton House, near Stockton-upon-Tees. Your principles are *now* as divine as before they were diabolical. I tell you this with extreme satisfaction, and, to sum up the whole, he has desired me to make his compliments to you, and to invite you to make Field Place your head-quarters for the Easter vacation. I hope you will accept of it. I fancy he has been talking in town to some of the northern Members of Parliament who are acquainted with your family. However that may be, I hope you have no other arrangement for Easter which can interfere with granting me the pleasure of introducing you personally here.

You have very well drawn your line of distinction between instinctive and rational motives of action; the *former* are not in our own power, yet we may doubt if even these are *purely* selfish, as congeniality, sympathy, unaccountable attractions of intellect, which arise independent frequently of any considerations of your own interest, operating violently in contradiction to it, and bringing on wretchedness, which your reason plainly foresees, which yet, although your judgment disproves of, you take no pains to obviate. All this is not selfish. And surely the operations of reason, of judgment, in a man whose judgment is fully convinced of the baseness of any motive, can never be consonant with it.

Adieu! Your affectionate.

To T. J. H., Oxford.

FIELD PLACE, Jan. 16, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You will hear from me to-morrow. I have, to-day, scarcely time but to tell you that I do not forget you. You tell me that it will show greatness of soul to rise after such a fall as mine. Ah! what pain must I feel when I contradict

the flattering view which you have taken of my character. Do I not know myself? Do I not feel the acutest poignancy of mortification amounting to actual misery? Alas! I must, with Godwin, say that in man, imperfect as he now exists, there is never a motive for action unmixed; that the best has its alloy, the worst is commingled with virtue. What does my mortification arise from? Surely not wholly for myself, not wholly for the happiness of the being whom I have lost. Did I know, were I convinced, that I felt for nothing but Her, no self-reproach would tell me that my pangs were disgraceful. But now, when I fear, when I feel, that, in spite of myself, regret for the high happiness which I have lost is mingled with the other consideration, do I feel, too, that it is disgraceful, degrading! Adieu! I will write to-morrow.

To T. J. H., Oxford.

FIELD PLACE, *January 17, 1811.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I shall be with you as soon as possible next week. You really were at Hungerford, whether you knew it or not. You tell me nothing about the tale which you promised me. I hope it gets on in the press, I am anxious for its appearance. S—— certainly behaved in a vile manner to me; no other bookseller would have violated the confidence reposed in him. I will talk to him in London, where I shall be on Tuesday. Can I do anything for you there?

You notice the peculiarity of the expression 'My Sister' in my letters. It certainly arose independent of consideration, and I am happy to hear that it is so.

Your systematic cudgel for blockheads is excellent. I tried it on with my father, who told me that thirty years ago he had read Locke, but this made no impression. The '*equus et res*' are all that I can boast of; the '*paler*' is swallowed up in the first article of the catalogue. You tell me nothing of the tale; I am all anxiety about it. I am forced hastily to bid you adieu.

To T. J. H.,

University College, Oxford.

We are told in the editor's preface to the *Poetical Works of Shelley*, that it was not until he resided in Italy that he made Plato his study. If it be meant, as no doubt it is, that he did not study Plato in the original, the assertion is correct. It

would be absurd to affirm that a profound, accurate, critical knowledge of the author may be acquired through the medium of translations, and at second-hand by abstracts and abridgements. But enough of the philosopher's doctrine and principles may be, and were, in fact, imbibed at Oxford, and at an early age, without consulting the Greek text to convince him of the incorrectness and inconclusiveness, of the dangers indeed, of the reasonings and conclusions of the school of Locke and his disciples. Many of the tenets of Plato, of Socrates their common master, are exhibited by Xenophon, whose writings we had already read in the original. The English version of the French translation by Dacier of the *Phædo*, and several other dialogues of Plato, was the first book we had, and this we read together several times very attentively at Oxford. We had a French translation of the *Republic*; and we perused with infinite pleasure the elegant translation of Floyer Sydenham. We had several of the publications of the learned and eccentric Platonist, Thomas Taylor. In truth, it would be tedious to specify and describe all the reflected lights borrowed from the great luminary, the sun of the Academy, that illumined the path of two young students. That Shelley had not read any portion of Plato in the original before he went to Italy, is not strictly true. He had a very legible edition of the Works of Plato in several volumes; a charming edition, the Bipont, I think, and I have read passages out of it with him. I remember going up to London with him from Marlow one morning; he took a volume of Plato with him, and we read a good deal of it together, sitting side by side on the top of the coach. *Phædrus*, I am pretty sure, was the dialogue—on beauty. Before Shelley came to Oxford he composed a tale, or a fragment of a tale, on the subject of the Wandering Jew, giving to him, however, the name of a Persian, not of a Jew—Ahasuerus, Artaxerxes. This no learned, accurate German would have done. That he found the composition in the streets of London is an integral portion of the fiction. 'This fragment is the translation of part of some German work, the title of which I have vainly endeavoured to discover. I picked it up, dirty and torn, some years ago, in Lincoln's Inn Fields.'

It is a common device to add to the interest of a romance by asserting that the MS. was discovered in a cavern, in a casket; that it had lain long hidden in an old chest, or a tomb. From the preface of *Dictys the Cretan*, whose history of the Trojan

war was discovered, we are told, in Crete, the author's tomb having been opened by an earthquake, down to the most modern fictions, this embellishment has been in constant use. Respecting the finding of this fragment, some have affirmed one thing, and some another. It has been said that it was part of a printed book in the German language. If it had been in German, Shelley could not have translated it at that time, for he did not know a word of German. The study of that tongue—being both equally ignorant of it—we commenced together in 1815. Of this our joint study hereafter. Somebody or other, determined not to be left behind in the race, declares that he found it himself, if I mistake not, and presented it to Shelley. Was not this worthy gentleman also present at Gnossus when the tablets of Dictys were brought to light by the earthquake? A portion of the fragment has been printed in the notes to *Queen Mab*. I have amongst Shelley's papers a fragment of the fragment, in his handwriting. It is one leaf only, and it appears to be the last, the conclusion of the story. The last sentence has never been printed; it presents the narrative of the sufferings of Ahasuerus in a totally different point of view with reference to moral and religious considerations, and is therefore not undeserving attention.

FRAGMENT OF THE WANDERING JEW

— did the elephant trample on me, in vain the iron hoof of the wrathful steed. The mine, big with destructive power, burst upon me and hurled me high in the air. I fell down upon a heap of smoking limbs, but was only singed. The giant's steel club rebounded from my body. The executioner's hand could not strangle me; nor would the hungry lion in the circus devour me; I cohabited with poisonous snakes; I pinched the red crest of the dragon; the serpent stung, but could not kill me; the dragon tormented, but could not devour me. I now provoked the fury of tyrants. I said to Nero, 'Thou art a bloodhound'; said to Christern, 'Thou art a bloodhound'; said to Muley Ismail, 'Thou art a bloodhound'. The tyrants invented cruel torments, but could not kill me. Ha! Not to be able to die; *not to be permitted to rest after the toils of life*; to be doomed for ever to be imprisoned in this *clay-formed* dungeon; to be for ever clogged with this worthless body, its load of diseases and infirmities; to be condemned to hold for millenniums that yawning monster, Time, that



hungry hyena, ever bearing children, ever devouring again her offspring.

Ha ! Not to be permitted to die ! Awful Avenger in Heaven, hast Thou in Thine armoury of wrath a punishment more dreadful ? Then let it thunder upon me. Command a hurricane to sweep me down to the foot of Carmel, that I there may lie extended, may pant, and writhe, and die !

And Ahasuerus dropped down. Night covered his bristly eyelid. The Angel bore me back to the cavern. 'Sleep here', said the Angel, 'sleep in peace ; the wrath of thy Judge is appeased ; when thou shalt awake, He will be arrived, He whose blood thou sawest flow upon Golgotha. Whose mercy is extended even to thee !'

LONDON, *May* 30, 1834.

MY DEAR SIR,

I did not inquire, but, as you did not show it to me, I presume you do not possess in your inestimable collection the autograph of poor Shelley. I now send you a poem, or rather a rough draft of part of a poem, by his hand, and from his head and heart. The papers amongst which it was found, and other circumstances, lead me to believe that it was written in 1810, when the young poet was but seventeen or eighteen years old. It is doubtless unpublished, and of a more early date than any of his published poems ; on all accounts, therefore, it is most interesting. I selected it for you soon after my return, but I mislaid it, and when I wrote to you the other day I could not find it. With kind regards to Mrs. Turner,

I am, etc.,

T. J. HOGG.

Dawson Turner, Esq.,
Yarmouth.

DEATH

For my dagger is bathed in the blood of the brave,
I come, care-worn tenant of life, from the grave,
Where Innocence sleeps 'neath the peace-giving sod,
And the good cease to tremble at Tyranny's nod ;
I offer a calm habitation to thee,
Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me ?
My mansion is damp, cold silence is there,
But it lulls in oblivion the fiends of despair,
Not a groan of regret, not a sigh, not a breath,
Dares dispute with grim silence the empire of Death.
I offer a calm habitation to thee,
Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me ?

MORTAL

Mine eyelids are heavy ; my soul seeks repose,
 It longs in thy cells to embosom its woes,
 It longs in thy cells to deposit its load,
 Where no longer the scorpions of Perfidy goad ;
 Where the phantoms of Prejudice vanish away,
 And Bigotry's bloodhounds lose scent of their prey ;
 Yet tell me, dark Death, when thine empire is o'er,
 What awaits on Futurity's mist-covered shore ?

DEATH

Cease, cease, wayward Mortal ! I dare not unveil
 The shadows that float on Eternity's vale ;
 Nought waits for the good, but a spirit of Love,
 That will hail their blest advent to regions above.
 For Love, Mortal, gleams thro' the gloom of my sway,
 And the shades which surround me fly fast at its ray.
 Hast thou loved ?—Then depart from these regions of hate,
 And in slumber with me blunt the arrows of fate.
 I offer a calm habitation to thee,
 Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me ?

MORTAL

Oh ! sweet is thy slumber ! oh ! sweet is the ray
 Which after thy night introduces the day ;
 How concealed, how persuasive, self-interest's breath,
 Tho' it floats to mine ear from the bosom of Death.
 I hoped that I quite was forgotten by all,
 Yet a lingering friend might be grieved at my fall,
 And duty forbids, tho' I languish to die,
 When departure might heave virtue's breast with a sigh.
 Oh, Death ! oh, my friend ! snatch this form to thy shrine,
 And I fear, dear destroyer, I shall not repine.

The following unfinished verses were written at Oxford ;
 they have never been published.

Death ! where is thy victory ?
 To triumph whilst I die,
 To triumph whilst thine ebony wing
 Infolds my shuddering soul.
 Oh, Death ! where is thy sting ?
 Not when the tides of murder roll,
 When nations groan, that kings may bask in bliss.
 Death ! canst thou boast a victory such as this ?
 When in his hour of pomp and power
 His blow the mightiest murders gave,
 'Mid nature's cries the sacrifice
 Of millions to glut the grave ;
 When sunk the tyrant desolation's slave ;
 Or Freedom's life-blood streamed upon thy shrine ;
 Stern tyrant, couldst thou boast a victory such as mine ?

To know in dissolution's void,
 That mortals baubles sunk decay,
 That everything, but Love, destroyed
 Must perish with its kindred clay.
 Perish Ambition's crown,
 Perish her sceptered sway ;
 From Death's pale front fades Pride's fastidious frown.
 In Death's damp vault the lurid fires decay.
 That Envy lights at heaven-born Virtue's beam—

That all the cares subside,
 Which lurk beneath the tide
 Of life's unquiet stream.
 Yes ! this is victory !
 And on yon rock, whose dark form glooms the sky,
 To stretch these pale limbs, when the soul is fled ;
 To baffle the lean passions of their prey,
 To sleep within the palace of the dead !
 Oh ! not the King, around whose dazzling throne
 His countless courtiers mock the words they say,
 Triumphs amid the bud of glory blown,
 As I in this cold bed, and faint expiring groan !

Tremble, ye proud, whose grandeur mocks the woe,
 Which props the column of unnatural state,
 You the plainings faint and low,
 From misery's tortured soul that flow,
 Shall usher to your fate.

Tremble, ye conquerors, at whose fell command
 The war-fiend riots o'er a peaceful land.
 You desolation's gory throng
 Shall bear from Victory along
 To that mysterious strand.

Cold, cold is the blast, when December is howling,
 Cold are the damps on a dying man's brow.
 Stern are the seas, when the wild waves are rolling,
 And sad the grave where a loved one lies low.
 But colder is scorn from the being who loved thee,
 More stern is the sneer from the friend who has proved thee,
 More sad are the tears when these sorrows have moved thee,
 Which mixed with groans, anguish, and wild madness flow.

And, ah ! poor Louisa has felt all this horror ;
 Full long the fallen victim contended with fate,
 Till a destitute outcast, abandoned to sorrow,
 She sought her babe's food at her ruler's gate.
 Another had charmed the remorseless betrayer,
 He turned callous aside from her moan and her prayer,—
 She said nothing, but wringing the wet from her hair,
 Crossed the dark mountain's side, tho' the hour it was late.

'Twas on the dark summit of huge Penmanmauer
 That the form of the wasted Louisa reclined ;
 She shrieked to the ravens that croaked from afar,
 And she sighed to the gusts of the wild-sweeping wind.
 'I call not yon clouds, where the thunder-peals rattle,
 I call not yon rocks, where the elements battle,
 But thee, perjured Henry, I call thee unkind !'

Then she wreathed in her hair the wild flowers of the mountain,
 And, deliriously laughing, a garland entwined,
 She bedewed it with tears, then she hung o'er the fountain,
 And, laving it, cast it a prey to the wind.
 'Ah, go,' she exclaimed, 'where the tempest is yelling ;
 'Tis unkind to be cast on the sea that is swelling ;
 But I left, a pitiless outcast, my dwelling ;
 My garments are torn—so, they say, is my mind.'

Not long lived Louisa—but over her grave
 Waved the desolate form of a storm-blasted yew,
 Around it no demons or ghosts dare to rave,
 But spirits of Peace steep her slumbers in dew.
 Then stay thy swift steps 'mid the dark mountain heather
 Tho' chill blow the wind and severe be the weather,
 For Perfidy, traveller, cannot bereave her
 Of the tears to the tombs of the innocent due !

Oh ! sweet is the moonbeam that sleeps on yon fountain,
 And sweet the mild rush of the soft-sighing breeze,
 And sweet is the glimpse of yon dimly-seen mountain
 'Neath the verdant arcades of yon shadowy trees ;
 But sweeter than all——

And, ah ! she may envy the heart-shocked quarry,
 Who bids to the scenery of childhood farewell,
 She may envy the bosom all bleeding and gory,
 She may envy the sound of the drear-passing knell.
 Not so deep are his woes on his death-couch reposing
 When on the last vision his dim eyes are closing,
 As the outcast——

Those notes were so sad and so soft, that, ah ! never
 May the sound cease to vibrate on memory's ear !

Bysshe wrote down these verses for me at Oxford from memory. I was to have a complete and more correct copy of them some day. They were the composition of his sister Elizabeth, and he valued them highly as well as their author, with whom, except an occasional tiff, when she preferred less dry and abstruse matters to his ethical and metaphysical speculations, he agreed most affectionately, cordially, and perfectly. I was to undertake to fall in love with her ; if I did not I had no

business to go to Field Place, and he would never forgive me. I promised to do my best ; and, probably, it would not have been difficult to have kept my promise, at least, in a poetical sense. For any one whose age, fortune, and inclinations disposed him to settle in life, it might have been very easy to fall in love in a more earnest and practical manner, for she was one of those young ladies who win golden opinions from all their acquaintance.

I often found Shelley reading *Gebir*. There was something in that poem which caught his fancy. He would read it aloud, or to himself sometimes, with a tiresome pertinacity. One morning, I went to his rooms to tell him something of importance, but he would attend to nothing but *Gebir*. With a young impatience, I snatched the book out of the obstinate fellow's hand, and threw it through the open window into the quadrangle. It fell upon the grass-plat, and was brought back presently by the servant. I related this incident, some years afterwards, and after the death of my poor friend, at Florence to the highly gifted author. He heard it with his hearty, cordial, genial laugh. 'Well, you must allow it is something to have produced what could please one fellow creature and offend another so much.'

I regret that those two intellectual persons were not acquainted with each other. If I would confer a real benefit upon a friend, I would procure for him, if it were possible, the friendship of Walter Savage Landor !

CHAPTER VI

'ABOVE all things, Liberty !' The political creed of Shelley may be comprised in a few words ; it was, in truth, that of most men, and, in a peculiar manner, of young men, during the freshness and early spring of revolutions. He held that not only is the greatest possible amount of civil liberty to be preferred to all other blessings, but that this advantage is all-sufficient, and comprehends within itself every other desirable object. The former position is as unquestionably true as the latter is undoubtedly false. It is no small praise, however, to a very young man, to say, that, on a subject so remote from the comprehension of youth, his opinions were at least half right.

Twenty years ago, the young men at our Universities were satisfied with upholding the political doctrines of which they approved by private discussions : they did not venture to form clubs of brothers, and to move resolutions, except a small number of enthusiasts, of doubtful sanity, who alone sought to usurp, by crude and premature efforts, the offices of a matured understanding and of manly experience.

Although our fellow-collegians were willing to learn before they took upon themselves the heavy and thankless charge of instructing others, there was no lack of beardless politicians amongst us : of these, some were more strenuous supporters of the popular cause in our little circles than others ; but all were abundantly liberal. A Brutus, or a Gracchus, would have found many to surpass him, and few, indeed, to fall short, in theoretical devotion to the interests of equal freedom. I can scarcely recollect a single exception amongst my numerous acquaintances : all, I think, were worthy of the best ages of Greece, or of Rome ; all were true, loyal citizens, brave and free. How, indeed, could it be otherwise ? Liberty is the morning-star of youth ; and those who enjoy the inappreciable blessing of a classical education, are taught betimes to lisp its praises. They are nurtured in the writings of its votaries ; and they even learn their native tongue, as it were, at second-hand, and reflected in the glorious pages of the authors, who, in the ancient languages, and in strains of a noble eloquence, that will never fail to astonish succeeding generations, proclaim unceasingly, with every variety of powerful and energetic phrase, ' Above all things, Liberty ! ' The praises of liberty were the favourite topic of our earliest verses, whether they flowed with natural ease, or were elaborated painfully out of the resources of art ; and the tyrant was set up as an object of scorn, to be pelted with the first ink of our themes. How, then, can an educated youth be other than free ?

Shelley was entirely devoted to the lovely theory of freedom ; but he was also eminently averse at that time from engaging in the far less beautiful practices wherein are found the actual and operative energies of liberty. I was maintaining against him one day at my rooms the superiority of the ethical sciences over the physical. In the course of the debate he cried, with shrill vehemence—for as his aspect presented to the eye much of the elegance of the peacock, so, in like manner, he cruelly lacerated the ear with its discordant tones—' You talk of the pre-eminence of moral philosophy ; do you comprehend

politics under that name ? and will you tell me, as others do, and as Plato, I believe, teaches, that of this philosophy the political department is the highest and the most important ? ' Without expecting an answer, he continued—' A certain nobleman (and he named him) advised me to turn my thoughts towards politics immediately. " You cannot direct your attention that way too early in this country ", said the Duke ; " they are the proper career for a young man of ability and of your station in life. That course is the most advantageous, because it is a monopoly. A little success in that line goes far, since the number of competitors is limited ; and of those who are admitted to the contest, the greater part are altogether devoid of talent, or too indolent to exert themselves : so many are excluded, that, of the few who are permitted to enter, it is difficult to find any that are not utterly unfit for the ordinary service of the state. It is not so in the church ; it is not so at the bar : there all may offer themselves. The number of rivals in those professions is far greater, and they are, besides, of a more formidable kind. In letters, your chance of success is still worse. There none can win gold, and all may try to gain reputation : it is a struggle for glory—the competition is infinite—there are no bounds—that is a spacious field, indeed—a sea without shores ! " The Duke talked thus to me many times, and strongly urged me to give myself up to politics without delay ; but he did not persuade me. With how unconquerable an aversion do I shrink from political articles in newspapers and reviews ! I have heard people talk politics by the hour, and how I hated it and them ! I went with my father several times to the House of Commons, and what creatures did I see there ! What faces !—what an expression of countenance !—what wretched beings ! ' Here he clasped his hands, and raised his voice to a painful pitch, with fervid dislike. ' Good God ! what men did we meet about the House—in the lobbies and passages ! and my father was so civil to all of them—to animals that I regarded with unmitigated disgust ! A friend of mine, an Eton man, told me that his father once invited some corporation to dine at his house, and that he was present. When dinner was over, and the gentlemen nearly drunk, they started up, he said, and swore they would all kiss his sisters. His father laughed, and did not forbid them ; and the wretches would have done it ; but his sisters heard of the infamous proposal, and ran up-stairs, and locked themselves in their bed-rooms. I asked him if he would not have knocked

them down if they had attempted such an outrage in his presence. It seems to me that a man of spirit ought to have killed them if they had effected their purpose.' The sceptical philosopher sat for several minutes in silence, his cheeks glowing with intense indignation.

'Never did a more finished gentleman than Shelley step across a drawing-room!' Lord Byron exclaimed; and on reading the remark in Mr. Moore's *Memoirs*, I was struck forcibly by its justice, and wondered for a moment that, since it was so obvious, it had never been made before. Perhaps this excellence was blended so intimately with his entire nature, that it seemed to constitute a part of his identity, and being essential and necessary was therefore never noticed. I observed his eminence in this respect before I had sat beside him many minutes at our first meeting in the hall of University College. Since that day, I have had the happiness to associate with some of the best specimens of gentlemen; but with all due deference for those admirable persons (may my candour and my preference be pardoned), I can affirm that Shelley was almost the only example I have yet found that was never wanting, even in the most minute particular, of the infinite and various observances of pure, entire, and perfect gentility. Trifling, indeed, and unimportant, were the aberrations of some whom I could name; but in him, during a long and most unusual familiarity, I discovered no flaw, no tarnish; the metal was sterling, and the polish absolute. I have also seen him, although rarely, 'stepping across a drawing-room', and then his deportment, as Lord Byron testifies, was unexceptionable. Such attendances, however, were pain and grief to him, and his inward discomfort was not hard to be discerned.

An acute observer, whose experience of life was infinite, and who had been long and largely conversant with the best society in each of the principal capitals of Europe, had met Shelley, of whom he was a sincere admirer, several times in public. He remarked one evening, at a large party where Shelley was present, his extreme discomfort, and added, 'It is but too plain that there is something radically wrong in the constitution of our assemblies, since such a man finds not pleasure, nor even ease, in them.' His speculations concerning the cause were ingenious, and would possibly be not altogether devoid of interest; but they are wholly unconnected with the object of these scanty reminiscences.

Whilst Shelley was still a boy, clubs were few in number,



of small dimensions, and generally confined to some specific class of persons ; the universal and populous clubs of the present day were almost unknown. His reputation has increased so much of late, that the honour of including his name in the list of members, were such a distinction happily attainable, would now perhaps be sought by many of these societies ; but it is not less certain, that for a period of nearly twenty years, he would have been black-balled by almost every club in London. Nor would such a fate be peculiar to him.

When a great man has attained to a certain eminence, his patronage is courted by those who were wont carefully to shun him, whilst he was quietly and steadily pursuing the path that would inevitably lead to advancement. It would be easy to multiply instances, if proofs were needed, and this remarkable peculiarity of our social existence is an additional and irrefragable argument that the constitution of refined society is radically vicious, since it flatters timid, insipid mediocrity, and is opposed to the bold, fearless originality, and to that novelty, which invariably characterise true genius. The first dawns of talent are instantly hailed and warmly welcomed, as soon as some singularity unequivocally attests its existence amongst nations where hypocrisy and intolerance are less absolute.

If all men were required to name the greatest disappointment they had respectively experienced, the catalogue would be very various ; accordingly as the expectations of each had been elevated respecting the pleasure that would attend the gratification of some favourite wish, would the reality in almost every case have fallen short of the anticipation. The variety would be infinite as to the nature of the first disappointment ; but if the same irresistible authority could command that another and another should be added to the list, it is probable that there would be less dissimilarity in the returns of the disappointments which were deemed second and the next in importance to the greatest, and perhaps, in numerous instances, the third would coincide. Many individuals, having exhausted their principal private and peculiar grievances in the first and second examples, would assign the third place to some public and general matter.

The youth who has formed his conceptions of the power, effects, and aspect of eloquence from the specimens furnished by the orators of Greece and Rome, receives as rude a shock on his first visit to the House of Commons as can possibly be

inflicted on his juvenile expectations, where the subject is entirely unconnected with the interests of the individual. A prodigious number of persons would, doubtless, inscribe nearly at the top of the list of disappointments the deplorable and inconceivable inferiority of the actual to the imaginary debate. It is not wonderful, therefore, that the sensitive, the susceptible, the fastidious Shelley, whose lively fancy was easily wound up to a degree of excitement incomprehensible to calmer and more phlegmatic temperaments, felt keenly a mortification that can wound even the most obtuse intellects, and expressed, with contemptuous acrimony, his dissatisfaction at the cheat which his warm imagination had put upon him. Had he resolved to enter the career of politics, it is possible that habit would have reconciled him to many things which at first seemed to be repugnant to his nature; it is possible that his unwearied industry, his remarkable talents and vast energy, would have led him to renown in that line as well as in another; but it is most probable that his parliamentary success would have been but moderate. Opportunities of advancement were offered to him, and he rejected them, in the opinion of some of his friends unwisely and improperly: but perhaps he only refused gifts that were unfit for him: he struck out a path for himself, and, by boldly following his own course, greatly as it deviated from that prescribed to him, he became incomparably more illustrious than he would have been had he steadily pursued the beaten track. His memory will be green when the herd of everyday politicians are forgotten. Ordinary rules may guide ordinary men, but the orbit of the child of genius is essentially eccentric.

Although the mind of Shelley had certainly a strong bias towards democracy, and he embraced with an ardent and youthful fondness the theory of political equality, his feelings and behaviour were in many respects highly aristocratical. The ideal republic, wherein his fancy loved to expatiate, was adorned by all the graces which Plato, Xenophon, and Cicero have thrown around the memory of ancient liberty; the unbleached web of transatlantic freedom, and the inconsiderate vehemence of such of our domestic patriots as would demonstrate their devotion to the good cause, by treating with irreverence whatever is most venerable, were equally repugnant to his sensitive and reverential spirit.

As a politician, Shelley was in theory wholly a republican,



but in practice, so far only as it is possible to be one with due regard for the sacred rights of a scholar and a gentleman ; and these being in his eyes always more inviolable than any scheme of polity, or civil institution, although he was upon paper and in discourse a sturdy common-wealth-man, the living, moving, acting individual, had much of the senatorial and conservative, and was, in the main, eminently patrician.

The rare assiduity of the young poet in the acquisition of general knowledge has been already described ; he had, moreover, diligently studied the mechanism of his art before he came to Oxford. He composed Latin verses with singular facility. On visiting him soon after his arrival at the accustomed hour of one, he was writing the usual exercise which we presented, I believe, once a week—a Latin translation of a paper in the *Spectator*. He soon finished it, and as he held it before the fire to dry, I offered to take it from him ; he said it was not worth looking at ; but as I persisted, through a certain scholastic curiosity to examine the Latinity of my new acquaintance, he gave it to me. The Latin was sufficiently correct, but the version was paraphrastic, which I observed ; he assented, and said that it would pass muster, and he felt no interest in such efforts, and no desire to excel in them. I also noticed many portions of heroic verses, and even several entire verses, and these I pointed out as defects in a prose composition. He smiled archly, and asked, in his piercing whisper—‘Do you think they will observe them ? I inserted them intentionally to try their ears ! I once showed up a theme at Eton to old Keate, in which there were a great many verses ; but he observed them, scanned them, and asked why I had introduced them ? I answered, that I did not know they were there : this was partly true and partly false ; but he believed me, and immediately applied to me the line, in which Ovid says of himself

Et quod tentabam dicere, versus erat.’

Shelley then spoke of the facility with which he could compose Latin verses ; and, taking the paper out of my hand, he began to put the entire translation into verse. He would some times open at hazard a prose writer, as Livy, or Sallust, and by changing the position of the words, and occasionally substituting others, he would transmute several sentences from prose to verse—to heroic, or more commonly elegiac,

verse, for he was peculiarly charmed with the graceful and easy flow of the latter—with surprising rapidity and readiness. He was fond of displaying this accomplishment during his residence at Oxford, but he forgot to bring it away with him when he quitted the University ; or perhaps he left it behind him designedly, as being suitable to academic groves only and to the banks of the Isis. In Ovid the facility of versification in his native tongue was possibly, in some measure, innate, although the extensive and various learning of that poet demonstrate that the power of application was not wanting in him ; but such a command over a dead language can only be acquired through severe study.

There is much in the poetry of Shelley that seems to encourage the belief, that the inspiration of the Muses was seldom duly hailed by the pious diligence of the recipient. It is true that his compositions were too often unfinished, but his example cannot encourage indolence in the youthful writer, for his carelessness is usually apparent only ; he had really applied himself as strenuously to conquer all the other difficulties of his art, as he patiently laboured to penetrate the mysteries of metre in the state wherein it exists entire and can alone be attained—in one of the classical languages.

The poet takes his name from the highest effort of his art—creation ; and, being himself a maker, he must, of necessity, feel a strong sympathy with the exercise of the creative energies. Shelley was exceedingly deficient in mechanical ingenuity ; and he was also wanting in spontaneous curiosity respecting the operations of artificers. The wonderful dexterity of well-practised hands, the long tradition of innumerable ages, and the vast accumulation of technical wisdom, that are manifested in the various handicrafts, have always been interesting to me, and I have ever loved to watch the artist at his work. I have often induced Shelley to take part in such observations, and although he never threw himself in the way of professors of the manual crudition of the workshop, his vivid delight in witnessing the marvels of the plastic hand, whenever they were brought before his eyes, was very striking ; and the rude workman was often gratified to find that his merit in one narrow field was, at once and intuitively, so fully appreciated by the young scholar. The instances are innumerable that would attest an unusual sympathy with arts of construction even in their most simple stages. One day he led him one summer's evening into a brick-field ; it had



never occurred to him to ask himself how a brick is formed ; the secret was revealed in a moment ; he was charmed with the simple contrivance, and astonished at the rapidity, facility, and exactness with which it was put in use by so many busy hands. An ordinary observer would have smiled and passed on, but the son of fancy confessed his delight with an energy which roused the attention even of the ragged throng, that seemed to exist only that they might pass successive lumps of clay through a wooden frame.

I was surprised at the contrast between the general indifference of Shelley for the mechanical arts, and his intense admiration of a particular application of one of them the first time I noticed the latter peculiarity. During our residence at Oxford, I repaired to his rooms one morning at the accustomed hour, and I found a tailor with him. He had expected to receive a new coat on the preceding evening ; it was not sent home, and he was mortified, I know not why, for he was commonly altogether indifferent about dress, and scarcely appeared to distinguish one coat from another. He was now standing erect in the middle of the room in his new blue coat, with all its glittering buttons, and to atone for the delay the tailor was loudly extolling the beauty of the cloth and the felicity of the fit ; his eloquence had not been thrown away upon his customer, for never was man more easily persuaded than the master of persuasion. The man of thimbles applied to me to vouch his eulogies ; I briefly assented to them. He withdrew, after some bows, and Shelley, snatching his hat, cried with shrill impatience :

‘ Let us go ! ’

‘ Do you mean to walk in the fields in your new coat ? ’ I asked.

‘ Yes certainly ’, he answered, and we sallied forth.

We sauntered for a moderate space through lanes and bye-ways, until we reached a spot near to a farm-house, where the frequent trampling of much cattle had rendered the road almost impassable, and deep with black mud ; but by crossing the corner of a stack yard, from one gate to another, we could tread upon clean straw, and could wholly avoid the impure and impracticable slough.

We had nearly effected the brief and commodious transit, I was stretching forth my hand to open the gate that led us back into the lane, when a lean, brindled, and most ill-favoured mastiff, that had stolen upon us softly over the straw unheard,

and without barking, seized Shelley suddenly by the skirts. I instantly kicked the animal in the ribs with so much force, that I felt for some days after the influence of his gaunt bones on my toe. The blow caused him to flinch towards the left, and Shelley, turning round quickly, planted a kick in his throat, which sent him away sprawling, and made him retire hastily among the stacks, and we then entered the lane. The fury of the mastiff, and the rapid turn, had torn the skirts of the new blue coat across the back, just about that part of the human loins which our tailors for some wise, but inscrutable purpose, are wont to adorn with two buttons. They were entirely severed from the body, except a narrow strip of cloth on the left side, and this Shelley presently rent asunder.

I never saw him so angry either before or since ; he vowed that he would bring his pistols and shoot the dog, and that he would proceed at law against the owner. The fidelity of the dog towards his master is very beautiful in theory, and there is much to admire and to revere in this ancient and venerable alliance ; but, in practice, the most unexceptionable dog is a nuisance to all mankind, except his master, at all times, and very often to him also, and a fierce surly dog is the enemy of the whole human race. The farm-yards, in many parts of England, are happily free from a pest that is formidable to everybody but thieves by profession ; in other districts savage dogs abound, and in none so much, according to my experience, as in the vicinity of Oxford. The neighbourhood of a still more famous city, of Rome, is likewise infested by dogs, more lowering, more ferocious, and incomparably more powerful.

Shelley was proceeding home with rapid strides, bearing the skirts of his new coat on his left arm, to procure his pistols, that he might wreak his vengeance upon the offending dog. I disliked the race, but I did not desire to take an ignoble revenge upon the miserable individual.

'Let us try to fancy, Shelley', I said to him, as he was posting away in indignant silence, 'that we have been at Oxford, and have come back again, and that you have just laid the beast low—and what then ?'

He was silent for some time, but I soon perceived, from the relaxation of his pace, that his anger had relaxed also.

At last he stopped short, and taking the skirts from his arm, spread them upon the hedge, stood gazing at them with



a mournful aspect, sighed deeply, and after a few minutes continued his march.

'Would it not be better to take the skirts with us?' I inquired.

'No', he answered despondingly, 'let them remain as a spectacle for men and gods!'

We returned to Oxford, and made our way by back streets to our College. As we entered the gates, the officious scout remarked with astonishment Shelley's strange spenser, and asked for the skirts, that he might instantly carry the wreck to the tailor. Shelley answered, with his peculiarly pensive air, 'They are upon the hedge.'

The scout looked up at the clock, at Shelley, and through the gate into the street as it were at the same moment and with one eager glance, and would have run blindly in quest of them, but I drew the skirts from my pocket, and unfolded them, and he followed us to Shelley's rooms.

We were sitting there in the evening, at tea, when the tailor who had praised the coat so warmly in the morning, brought it back as fresh as ever and apparently uninjured. It had been fine-drawn; he showed how skilfully the wound had been healed, and he commended, at some length, the artist who had effected the cure. Shelley was astonished and delighted: had the tailor consumed the new blue coat in one of his crucibles, and suddenly raised it, by magical incantation, a fresh and purple Phoenix from the ashes, his admiration could hardly have been more vivid. It might be, in this instance, that his joy at the unexpected restoration of a coat, for which, although he was utterly indifferent to dress, he had, through some unaccountable caprice, conceived a fondness, gave force to his sympathy with art; but I have remarked in innumerable cases, where no personal motive could exist, that he was animated by all the ardour of a maker in witnessing the display of the creative energies.

Nor was the young poet less interested by imitation, especially the imitation of action, than by the creative arts. Our theatrical representations have long been degraded by a most pernicious monopoly, by vast abuses, and enormous corruptions, and by the prevalence of bad taste; far from feeling a desire to visit the theatres, Shelley would have esteemed it a cruel infiction to have been compelled to witness performances that less fastidious critics have deemed intolerable. He found delight, however, in reading the best

of our English dramas, particularly the masterpieces of Shakespeare, and he was never weary of studying the more perfect compositions of the Attic tragedians. The lineaments of individual character may frequently be traced more certainly, and more distinctly, in trifles than in more important affairs ; for in the former the deportment, even of the boldest and most ingenuous, is more entirely emancipated from every restraint. I recollect many minute traits that display the inborn sympathy of a brother practitioner in the mimetic arts ; one silly tale, because, in truth, it is the most trivial of all, will best illustrate the conformation of his mind ; its childishness, therefore, will be pardoned.

A young man of studious habits, and of considerable talent, occasionally derived a whimsical amusement, during his residence at Cambridge, from entering the public-houses in the neighbouring villages, whilst the fen-farmers and other rustics were smoking and drinking, and from repeating a short passage of a play, or a portion of an oration, which described the death of a distinguished person, the fatal result of a mighty battle, or other important event, in a forcible manner. He selected a passage of which the language was nearly on a level with vulgar comprehension, or he adapted one by somewhat mitigating its elevation ; and although his appearance did not bespeak histrionic gifts, he was able to utter it impressively, and what was most effective, not theatrically, but simply, and with the air of a man who was in earnest ; and if he were interrupted or questioned, he could slightly modify the discourse, without materially changing the sense, to give it a further appearance of reality ; and so staid and sober was the gravity of his demeanour as to render it impossible for the clowns to solve the wonder by supposing that he was mad. During his declamation the orator feasted inwardly on the stupid astonishment of his petrified audience, and he further regaled himself afterwards by imagining the strange conjectures that would commence at his departure.

Shelley was much interested by the account I gave him of this curious fact, from the relation of two persons, who had witnessed the performance. He asked innumerable questions, which I was in general quite unable to answer ; and he spoke of it as something altogether miraculous, that any one should be able to recite extraordinary events in such a manner as to gain credence. As he insisted much upon the difficulty of the exploit, I told him that I thought he greatly over-esti-



mated it. I was disposed to believe that it was in truth easy ; that faith and a certain gravity were alone needed. I had been struck by the story, when I first heard it ; and I had often thought of the practicability of imitating the deception, and although I had never proceeded so far myself, I had once or twice found it convenient to attempt something similar. At these words Shelley drew his chair close to mine, and listened with profound silence and intense curiosity.

I was walking one afternoon, in the summer, on the western side of that short street leading from Long Acre to Covent Garden, wherein the passenger is earnestly invited, as a personal favour to the demandant, to proceed straightway to Highgate or to Kentish Town, and which is called, I think James Street ; I was about to enter Covent Garden, when an Irish labourer, whom I met, bearing an empty hod, accosted me somewhat roughly, and asked why I had run against him ; I told him briefly that he was mistaken. Whether somebody had actually pushed the man, or he sought only to quarrel, and although he doubtless attended a weekly row regularly, and the week was already drawing to a close, he was unable to wait until Sunday for a broken head, I know not, but he discoursed for some time with the vehemence of a man who considers himself injured or insulted, and he concluded, being emboldened by my long silence, with a cordial invitation just to push him again. Several persons not very unlike in costume had gathered round him, and appeared to regard him with sympathy. When he paused, I addressed to him slowly and quietly, and it should seem with great gravity, these words, as nearly as I can recollect them :

‘ I have put my hand into the hamper ; I have looked upon the sacred barley ; I have eaten out of the drum ! I have drunk and was well pleased : I have said, *κὺξ ὄμπαξ*, and it is finished ! ’

‘ Have you, Sir ? ’ inquired the astonished Irishman, and his ragged friends instantly pressed round him with ‘ Where is the hamper, Paddy ? ’—‘ What barley ? ’ and the like. And ladies from his own country, that is to say, the basket-women, suddenly began to interrogate him, ‘ Now, I say, Pat, where have you been drinking ? What have you had ? ’

I turned therefore to the right, leaving the astounded neophyte, whom I had thus planted, to expound the mystic words of initiation, as he could, to his inquisitive companions.

As I walked slowly under the piazzas, and through the streets and courts, towards the west, I marvelled at the ingenuity of Orpheus—if he were indeed the inventor of the Eleusinian mysteries—that he was able to devise words that, imperfectly as I had repeated them, and in the tattered fragment that has reached us, were able to soothe people so savage and barbarous as those to whom I had addressed them, and which, as the apologists for those venerable rites affirm, were manifestly well adapted to incite persons, who hear them for the first time, however rude they may be, to ask questions. Words, that can awaken curiosity, even in the sluggish intellect of a wild man, and can thus open the inlet of knowledge.

'*Konx ompax*, and it is finished!' exclaimed Shelley, crowing with enthusiastic delight at my whimsical adventure. A thousand times as he strode about the house, and in his rambles out of doors, would he stop and repeat aloud the mystic words of initiation, but always with an energy of manner, and a vehemence of tone and of gesture, that would have prevented the ready acceptance, which a calm, passionless delivery had once procured for them. How often would he throw down his book, clasp his hands, and starting from his seat, cry suddenly, with a thrilling voice, 'I have said *Konx ompax*, and it is finished!'

CHAPTER VII

As our attention is most commonly attracted by those departments of knowledge which are striking and remarkable, rather than by those which are really useful, so, in estimating the character of an individual, we are prone to admire extraordinary intellectual powers and uncommon energies of thought, and to overlook that excellence which is, in truth, the most precious—his moral value. Was the subject of biography distinguished by a vast erudition? Was he conspicuous for an original genius; for a warm and fruitful fancy? Such are the implied questions which we seek to resolve by consulting the memoirs of his life. We may sometimes desire to be informed whether he was a man of nice honour and conspicuous integrity; but how rarely do we feel any curiosity with respect to that quality which is, perhaps,

the most important to his fellows—how seldom do we desire to measure his benevolence ! It would be impossible faithfully to describe the course of a single day in the ordinary life of Shelley without showing, incidentally and unintentionally, that his nature was eminently benevolent—and many minute traits, pregnant with proof, have been already scattered by the way ; but it would be an injustice to his memory to forbear to illustrate expressly, but briefly, in leave-taking, the ardent, devoted, and unwearied love he bore his kind.

A personal intercourse could alone enable the observer to discern in him a soul ready winged for flight, and scarcely detained by the fetters of body : that happiness was, if possible, still more indispensable to open the view of the unbounded expanse of cloudless philanthropy—pure, disinterested, and unvaried—the aspect of which often filled with mute wonder the minds of simple people, unable to estimate a penetrating genius, a docile sagacity, a tenacious memory, or, indeed, any of the various ornaments of the soul.

Whenever the intimate friends of Shelley speak of him in general terms, they speedily and unconsciously fall into the language of panegyric—a style of discourse that is barren of instruction, wholly devoid of interest, and justly suspected by the prudent stranger. It becomes them, therefore, on discovering the error they have committed, humbly to entreat the forgiveness of the charitable for human infirmity, oppressed and weighed down by the fulness of the subject—carefully to abstain in future from every vague expression of commendation, and faithfully to relate a plain, honest tale of unadorned facts.

A regard for children, singular and touching, is an unerring and most engaging indication of a benevolent mind. That this characteristic was not wanting in Shelley might be demonstrated by numerous examples which crowd upon the recollection, each of them bearing the strongly impressed stamp of individuality ; for genius renders every surrounding circumstance significant and important. In one of our rambles we were traversing the bare, squalid, ugly, corn-yielding country, that lies, if I remember rightly, to the south-west of Oxford : the hollow road ascended a hill, and near the summit Shelley observed a female child leaning against the bank on the right : it was of a mean, dull, and unattractive aspect, and older than its stunted growth denoted. The morning, as well as the preceding night, had been rainy : it

had cleared up at noon with a certain ungenial sunshine, and the afternoon was distinguished by that intense cold which sometimes, in the winter season, terminates such days. The little girl was oppressed by cold, by hunger, and by a vague feeling of abandonment. It was not easy to draw from her blue lips an intelligible history of her condition. Love, however, is at once credulous and apprehensive; and Shelley immediately decided that she had been deserted, and, with his wonted precipitation (for in the career of humanity his active spirit knew no pause), he proposed different schemes for the permanent relief of the poor foundling, and he hastily inquired which of them was the most expedient. I answered that it was desirable, in the first place, to try to procure some food, for of this the want was manifestly the most urgent. I then climbed the hill to reconnoitre, and observed a cottage close at hand, on the left of the road. With considerable difficulty—with a gentle violence, indeed—Shelley induced the child to accompany him thither. After much delay, we procured from the people of the place, who resembled the dull, uncouth, and perhaps sullen, rustics of that district, some warm milk.

It was a strange spectacle to watch the young poet, whilst, with the enthusiastic and intensely earnest manner that characterizes the legitimate brethren of the celestial art—the heaven-born and fiercely inspired sons of genuine poesy—holding the wooden bowl in one hand and the wooden spoon in the other, and kneeling on his left knee, that he might more certainly attain to her mouth, he urged and encouraged the torpid and timid child to eat. The hot milk was agreeable to the girl, and its effects were salutary; but she was obviously uneasy at the detention. Her uneasiness increased, and ultimately prevailed: we returned with her to the place where we had found her, Shelley bearing the bowl of milk in his hand. Here we saw some people anxiously looking for the child—a man and, I think, four women, strangers of the poorest class, of a mean, but not disreputable, appearance. As soon as the girl perceived them she was content, and taking the bowl from Shelley, she finished the milk without his help.

Meanwhile, one of the women explained the apparent desertion with a multitude of rapid words. They had come from a distance, and to spare the weary child the fatigue of walking farther, the day being at that time sunny, they left



her to await their return those unforeseen delays, which harass all, and especially the poor, in transacting business, had detained them much longer than they had anticipated.

Such, in a few words, is the story, which was related in many, and which the little girl, who, it was said, was somewhat deficient in understanding, as well as in stature, was unable to explain. So humble was the condition of these poor wayfaring folks, that they did not presume to offer thanks in words but they often turned back, and with mute wonder gazed at Shelley, who, totally unconscious that he had done anything to excite surprise, returned with huge strides to the cottage, to restore the bowl and to pay for the milk. As the needy travellers pursued their toilsome, and possibly fruitless journey, they had at least the satisfaction to reflect that all above them were not desolated by a dreary apathy, but that some hearts were warm with that angelic benevolence towards inferiors in which still higher natures, as we are taught, largely participate.

Shelley would often pause, halting suddenly in his swift course, to admire the children of the country-people; and after gazing on a sweet and intelligent countenance, he would exhibit, in the language and with an aspect of acute anguish, his intense feeling of the future sorrows and sufferings—of all the manifold evils of life—which too often distort, by a mean and most disagreeable expression, the innocent, happy, and engaging lineaments of youth. He sometimes stopped to observe the softness and simplicity that the face and gestures of a gentle girl displayed, and he would surpass her gentleness by his own.

We were strolling one day in the neighbourhood of Oxford, when Shelley was attracted by a little girl: he turned aside, and stood and observed her in silence. She was about six years of age, small and slight, bare-headed, bare-legged, and her apparel variegated and tattered. She was busily employed in collecting empty snail-shells, so much occupied indeed, that some moments elapsed before she turned her face towards us. When she did so, we perceived that she was evidently a young gipsy; and Shelley was forcibly struck by the vivid intelligence of her wild and swarthy countenance, and especially by the sharp glance of her fierce black eyes. 'How much intellect is here!' he exclaimed, 'in how humble a vessel, and what an unworthy occupation for a person who once knew perfectly the whole circle of the sciences; who has forgotten them all, it is true, but who could certainly recollect them,

although most probably she will never do so ; will never recall a single principle of any one of them ! ’

As he spoke, he turned aside a bramble with his foot, and discovered a large shell, which the alert child instantly caught up and added to her store ; at the same moment a small stone was thrown from the other side of the road ; it fell in the hedge near us. We turned round and saw on the top of a high bank a boy some three years older than the girl, and in as rude a guise ; he was looking at us over a low hedge with a smile, but plainly not without suspicion. We might be two kidnappers, he seemed to think : he was in charge of his little sister, and did not choose to have her stolen before his face. He gave the signal therefore, and she obeyed it, and had almost joined him before we missed her from our side. They both disappeared, and we continued our walk.

Shelley was charmed with the intelligence of the two children of nature, and with their marvellous wildness : he talked much about them, and compared them to birds, and to the two wild leverets, which that wild mother, the hare, produces. We sauntered about, and half an hour afterwards, on turning a corner, we suddenly met the two children again full in the face. The meeting was unlooked for, and the air of the boy showed that it was unpleasant to him : he had a large bundle of dry sticks under his arm ; these he gently dropped, and stood motionless with an apprehensive smile—a deprecatory smile. We were perhaps the lords of the soil, and his patience was prepared, for patience was his lot—an inalienable inheritance long entailed upon his line—to hear a severe reproof with heavy threats, possibly even to receive blows with a stick gathered by himself, not altogether unwittingly, for his own back ; or to find mercy and forbearance. Shelley’s demeanour soon convinced him that he had nothing to fear : he laid a hand on the round, matted, knotted, bare, and black head of each, viewed their moving, mercurial countenances with renewed pleasure and admiration, and shaking his long locks, suddenly strode away. ‘ That little ragged fellow knows as much as the wisest philosopher ’, he presently cried, clapping the wings of his soul, and crowing aloud with shrill triumph at the felicitous union of the true with the ridiculous,—‘ but he will not communicate any portion of his knowledge : it is not from churlishness however, for of that his nature is plainly incapable ; but the sophisticated urchin will persist in thinking he has forgotten all that he knows so well. I was about to

ask him myself to communicate some of the doctrines Plato unfolds in his *Dialogues* : but I felt that it would do no good : the rogue would have laughed at me, and so would his little sister. I wonder you did not propose to them some mathematical questions : just a few interrogations in your geometry ; for that being so plain and certain, if it be once thoroughly understood, can never be forgotten ! ’

A day or two afterwards (or it might be on the morrow) as we were rambling in the favourite region at the foot of Shotover Hill, a gipsy’s tent by the roadside caught Shelley’s eye : men and women were seated on the ground in front of it, watching a pot suspended over a smoky fire of sticks. He cast a passing glance at the ragged group, but immediately stopped on recognizing the children, who remembered us, and ran laughing into the tent. Shelley laughed also, and waved his hand, and the little girl returned the salutation.

There were many striking contrasts in the character and behaviour of Shelley, and one of the most remarkable was a mixture, or alternation, of awkwardness with agility—of the clumsy with the graceful. He would stumble in stepping across the floor of a drawing-room ; he would trip himself up on a smooth-shaven grass-plot, and he would tumble in the most inconceivable manner in ascending the commodious, facile, and well-carpeted staircase of an elegant mansion, so as to bruise his nose or his lip on the upper steps, or to tread upon his hands, and even occasionally to disturb the composure of a well-bred footman ; on the contrary, he would often glide without collision through a crowded assembly, thread with unerring dexterity a most intricate path, or securely and rapidly tread the most arduous and uncertain ways. As soon as he saw the children enter the tent, he darted after them with his peculiar agility, followed them into their low, narrow, and fragile tenement, penetrated to the bottom of the tent without removing his hat, or striking against the woven edifice. He placed a hand on each round, rough head, spoke a few kind words to the skulking children, and then returned not less precipitately, and with as much ease and accuracy, as if he had been a dweller in tents from the hour when he first drew air and milk to that day—as if he had been the descendant, not of a gentry house, but of a long line of gipsies. His visit roused the jealousy of a stunted, feeble dog, which followed him and barked with helpless fury : he did not heed it, nor perhaps hear it. The company of gipsies were astonished at

the first visit that had ever been made by a member of either University to their humble dwelling ; but as its object was evidently benevolent, they did not stir or interfere, but greeted him on his return with a silent and unobserved salutation. He seized my arm, and we prosecuted our speculations, as we walked briskly to our college.

The marvellous gentleness of his demeanour could conciliate the least sociable natures, and it had secretly touched the wild things which he had thus briefly noticed.

We were wandering through the roads and lanes at a short distance from the tent soon afterwards, and were pursuing our way in silence ; I turned round at a sudden sound ;—the young gipsy had stolen upon us unperceived, and with a long bramble had struck Shelley across the skirts of his coat : he had dropped his rod, and was returning softly to the hedge.

Certain misguided persons, who, unhappily for themselves, were incapable of understanding the true character of Shelley, have published many false and injurious calumnies respecting him—some for hire, others drawing largely out of the inborn vulgarity of their own minds, or from the necessary malignity of ignorance—but no one ever ventured to say that he was not a good judge of an orange ! At this time, in his nineteenth year, although temperate, he was less abstemious in his diet than he afterwards became, and he was frequently provided with some fine samples. As soon as he understood the rude but friendly welcome to the heaths and lanes, he drew an orange from his pocket, and rolled it after the retreating gipsy along the grass by the side of the wide road. The boy started with surprise as the golden fruit passed him, quickly caught it up, and joyfully bore it away, bending reverently over it, and carrying it with both his hands, as if, together with almost the size, it had also the weight of a cannon-ball.

His passionate fondness of the Platonic philosophy seemed to sharpen his natural affection for children, and his sympathy with their innocence. Every true Platonist, he used to say, must be a lover of children, for they are our masters and instructors in philosophy : the mind of a new-born infant, so far from being, as Locke affirms, a sheet of blank paper, is a pocket edition, containing every dialogue, a complete Elzevir Plato, if we can fancy such a pleasant volume ; and, moreover, a perfect encyclopedia, comprehending not only the newest discoveries, but all those still more valuable and wonderful inventions that will hereafter be made !



One Sunday we had been reading Plato together so diligently, that the usual hour of exercise passed away unperceived: we sallied forth hastily to take the air for half an hour before dinner. In the middle of Magdalen Bridge we met a woman with a child in her arms. Shelley was more attentive at that instant to our conduct in a life that was past, or to come, than to a decorous regulation of the present, according to the established usages of society, in that fleeting moment of eternal duration, styled the nineteenth century. With abrupt dexterity he caught hold of the child. The mother, who might well fear that it was about to be thrown over the parapet of the bridge into the sedgy waters below, held it fast by its long train.

'Will your baby tell us anything about pre-existence, Madam?' he asked, in a piercing voice, and with a wistful look

The mother made no answer, but perceiving that Shelley's object was not murderous, but altogether harmless, she dismissed her apprehension, and relaxed her hold.

'Will your baby tell us anything about pre-existence, Madam?' he repeated, with unabated earnestness.

'He cannot speak, Sir', said the mother seriously.

'Worse and worse', cried Shelley, with an air of deep disappointment, shaking his long hair most pathetically about his young face; 'but surely the babe can speak if he will, for he is only a few weeks old. He may fancy perhaps that he cannot, but it is only a silly whim; he cannot have forgotten entirely the use of speech in so short a time; the thing is absolutely impossible.'

'It is not for me to dispute with you, Gentlemen', the woman meekly replied, her eye glancing at our academical garb; 'but I can safely declare that I never heard him speak, nor any child, indeed, of his age'.

It was a fine placid boy; so far from being disturbed by the interruption, he looked up and smiled. Shelley pressed his fat cheeks with his fingers, we commended his healthy appearance and his equanimity, and the mother was permitted to proceed, probably to her satisfaction, for she would doubtless prefer a less speculative nurse. Shelley sighed deeply as we walked on.

'How provokingly close are those new-born babes!' he ejaculated; 'but it is not the less certain, notwithstanding the cunning attempts to conceal the truth, that all knowledge

is reminiscence: the doctrine is far more ancient than the times of Plato, and as old as the venerable allegory that the Muses are the daughters of Memory; not one of the nine was ever said to be the child of Invention!

In consequence of this theory, upon which his active imagination loved to dwell, and which he was delighted to maintain in argument with the few persons qualified to dispute with him on the higher metaphysics, his fondness for children—a fondness innate in generous minds—was augmented and elevated, and the gentle instinct expanded into a profound and philosophical sentiment. The Platonists have been illustrious in all ages, on account of the strength and permanence of their attachments. In Shelley the parental affections were developed at an early period to an unusual extent: it was manifest, therefore, that his heart was formed by nature and by cultivation to derive the most exquisite gratification from the society of his own progeny, or the most poignant anguish from a natural or unnatural bereavement. To strike him here was the cruel admonition which a cursory glance would at once convey to him who might seek where to wound him most severely with a single blow, should he ever provoke the vengeance of an enemy to the active and fearless spirit of liberal investigation and to all solid learning—of a foe to the human race. With respect to the theory of the pre-existence of the soul, it is not wonderful that an ardent votary of the intellectual should love to uphold it in strenuous and protracted disputation, as it places the immortality of the soul in an impregnable castle, and not only secures it an existence independent of the body, as it were, by usage and prescription, but moreover, raising it out of the dirt on tall stilts—elevates it far above the mud of matter.

It is not wonderful that a subtle sophist, who esteemed above all riches and terrene honours victory in well-fought debate, should be willing to maintain a dogma that is not only of difficult eversion by those, who, struggling as mere metaphysicians, use no other weapon than unassisted reason, but which one of the most illustrious Fathers of the Church—a man of amazing powers and stupendous erudition, armed with the prodigious resources of the Christian theology, the renowned Origen—was unable to dismiss; retaining it as not dissonant from his informed reason, and as affording a larger scope for justice in the moral government of the universe.

In addition to his extreme fondness for children, another,

and a not less unequivocal, characteristic of a truly philanthropic mind, was eminently and still more remarkably conspicuous in Shelley—his admiration of men of learning and genius. In truth, the devotion, the reverence, the religion, with which he was kindled towards all the masters of intellect, cannot be described, and must be utterly inconceivable to minds less deeply enamoured with the love of wisdom. The irreverent many cannot comprehend the awe—the careless apathetic worldling cannot imagine the enthusiasm—nor can the tongue that attempts only to speak of things visible to the bodily eye, express the mighty emotion that inwardly agitated him, when he approached, for the first time, a volume which he believed to be replete with the recondite and mystic philosophy of antiquity : his cheeks glowed, his eyes became bright, his whole frame trembled, and his entire attention was immediately swallowed up in the depths of contemplation. The rapid and vigorous conversion of his soul to intellect can only be compared with the instantaneous ignition and combustion, which dazzle the sight, when a bundle of dry reeds, or other light inflammable substance, is thrown upon a fire already rich with accumulated heat.

The company of persons of merit was delightful to him, and he often spoke with a peculiar warmth of the satisfaction he hoped to derive from the society of the most distinguished literary and scientific characters of the day in England, and the other countries of Europe, when his own attainments would justify him in seeking their acquaintance. He was never weary of recounting the rewards and favours that authors had formerly received ; and he would detail in pathetic language, and with a touching earnestness, the instances of that poverty and neglect, which an iron age assigned as the fitting portion of solid erudition and undoubted talents. He would contrast the niggard praise and the paltry payments, that the cold and wealthy moderns reluctantly dole out, with the ample and heartfelt commendation, and the noble remuneration, which were freely offered by the more generous but less opulent ancients. He spoke with an animation of gesture and an elevation of voice of him who undertook a long journey, that he might once see the historian Livy ; and he recounted the rich legacies which were bequeathed to Cicero and to Pliny the younger, by testators venerating their abilities and attainments—his zeal, enthusiastic in the cause of letters, giving an interest and a novelty to the most trite and familiar instances.

His disposition being wholly munificent, gentle, and friendly, how generous a patron would he have proved had he ever been in the actual possession of even moderate wealth !

Out of a scanty and somewhat precarious income, inadequate to allow the indulgence of the most ordinary superfluities, and diminished by various casual but unavoidable incumbrances, he was able, by restricting himself to a diet more simple than the fare of the most austere anchorite, and by refusing himself horses and the other gratifications that appear properly to belong to his station, and of which he was in truth very fond, to bestow upon men of letters, whose merits were of too high an order to be rightly estimated by their own generation, donations large indeed, if we consider from how narrow a source they flowed. But to speak of this his signal and truly admirable bounty, save only in the most distant manner, and the most general terms, would be a flagrant violation of that unequalled delicacy with which it was extended to undeserved indigence, accompanied by well-founded and most commendable pride. To allude to any particular instance, however obscurely and indistinctly, would be unpardonable ; but it would be scarcely less blameable to dismiss the consideration of the character of the benevolent young poet without some imperfect testimony of this rare excellence.

That he gave freely, when the needy scholar asked, or in silent, hopeless poverty seemed to ask, his aid, will be demonstrated most clearly by relating shortly one example of his generosity, where the applicant had no pretensions to literary renown, and no claim whatever, except perhaps honest penury. It is delightful to attempt to delineate from various points of view a creature of infinite moral beauty—but one instance must suffice : an ample volume might be composed of such tales, but one may be selected, because it contains a large admixture of that ingredient which is essential to the conversion of alms-giving into the genuine virtue of charity—self-denial.

On returning to town after the long vacation, at the end of October, I found Shelley at one of the hotels in Covent Garden. Having some business in hand he was passing a few days there alone. We had taken some mutton chops hastily at a dark place in one of the minute courts of the city, at an early hour, and we went forth to walk ; for to walk at all times, and especially in the evening, was his supreme delight.

The aspect of the fields to the north of Somers Town, between



that beggarly suburb and Kentish Town, has been totally changed of late. Although this district could never be accounted pretty, nor deserving a high place even amongst suburban scenes, yet the air, or often the wind, seemed pure and fresh to captives emerging from the smoke of London : there were certain old elms, much very green grass, quiet cattle feeding, and groups of noisy children playing with something of the freedom of the village green. There was, oh blessed thing ! an entire absence of carriages and of blood-horses ; of the dust and dress and affectation and fashion of the parks : there were, moreover, old and quaint edifices and objects which gave character to the scene.

Whenever Shelley was imprisoned in London—for to a poet a close and crowded city must be a dreary gaol—his steps would take that direction, unless his residence was too remote, or he was accompanied by one who chose to guide his walk. On this occasion I was led thither, as indeed I had anticipated : the weather was fine, but the autumn was already advanced ; we had not sauntered long in these fields when the dusky evening closed in, and the darkness gradually thickened.

‘ How black those trees are ’, said Shelley, stopping short, and pointing to a row of elms ; ‘ it is so dark the trees might well be houses, and the turf, pavement—the eye would sustain no loss ; it is useless therefore to remain here, let us return ’. He proposed tea at his hotel ; I assented ; and hastily buttoning his coat, he seized my arm, and set off at his great pace, striding with bent knees over the fields and through the narrow streets. We were crossing the New Road, when he said shortly,

‘ I must call for a moment, but it will not be out of the way at all ’, and then dragged me suddenly towards the left. I inquired whither we were bound, and, I believe, I suggested the postponement of the intended call till the morrow. He answered, it was not at all out of our way.

I was hurried along rapidly towards the left ; we soon fell into an animated discussion respecting the nature of the virtue of the Romans, which in some measure beguiled the weary way. Whilst he was talking with much vehemence and a total disregard of the people who thronged the streets, he suddenly wheeled about and pushed me through a narrow door ; to my infinite surprise I found myself in a pawnbroker’s shop ! It was in the neighbourhood of Newgate Street ; for he had no idea whatever in practice either of time or space, nor did he in any degree regard method in the conduct of business.

There were several women in the shop in brown and gray cloaks with squalling children ; some of them were attempting to persuade the children to be quiet, or at least to scream with moderation ; the others were enlarging upon and pointing out the beauties of certain coarse and dirty sheets that lay before them to a man on the other side of the counter.

I bore this substitute for our proposed tea some minutes with tolerable patience, but as the call did not promise to terminate speedily, I said to Shelley, in a whisper, ' Is not this almost as bad as the Roman virtue ? ' Upon this he approached the pawnbroker : it was long before he could obtain a hearing, and he did not find civility. The man was unwilling to part with a valuable pledge so soon, or perhaps he hoped to retain it eventually ; or it might be, that the obliquity of his nature disqualified him for respectful behaviour.

A pawnbroker is frequently an important witness in criminal proceedings : it has happened to me, therefore, afterwards to see many specimens of this kind of banker ; they sometimes appeared not less respectable than other tradesman, and sometimes I have been forcibly reminded of the first I ever met with, by an equally ill-conditioned fellow. I was so little pleased with the introduction, that I stood aloof in the shop, and did not hear what passed between him and Shelley.

On our way to Covent-Garden, I expressed my surprise and dissatisfaction at our strange visit, and I learned that when he came to London before, in the course of the summer, some old man had related to him a tale of distress—of a calamity which could only be alleviated by the timely application of ten pounds ; five of them he drew at once from his pocket, and to raise the other five he had pawned his beautiful solar microscope ! He related this act of beneficence simply and briefly, as if it were a matter of course, and such indeed it was to him. I was ashamed of my impatience, and we strode along in silence.

It was past ten when we reached the hotel ; some excellent tea and a liberal supply of hot muffins in the coffee-room, now quiet and solitary, were the more grateful after the wearisome delay and vast deviation. Shelley often turned his head, and cast eager glances towards the door ; and whenever the waiter replenished our teapot, or approached our box, he was interrogated whether any one had yet called.

At last the desired summons was brought ; Shelley drew forth some bank notes, hurried to the bar, and returned as hastily, bearing in triumph under his arm a mahogany box,



followed by the officious waiter, with whose assistance he placed it upon the bench by his side. He viewed it often with evident satisfaction and sometimes patted it affectionately in the course of calm conversation. The solar microscope was always a favourite plaything or instrument of scientific inquiry ; whenever he entered a house his first care was to choose some window of a southern aspect, and, if permission could be obtained by prayer or by purchase, straightway to cut a hole through the shutter to receive it.

His regard for his solar microscope was as lasting as it was strong ; for he retained it several years after this adventure, and long after he had parted with all the rest of his philosophical apparatus.

Such is the story of the microscope, and no rightly judging person who hears it will require the further accumulation of proofs of a benevolent heart ; nor can I, perhaps, better close these sketches than with that impression of the pure and genial beauty of Shelley's nature which this simple anecdote will bequeath.

CHAPTER VIII

THE theory of civil liberty has ever seemed lovely to the eyes of a young man enamoured of moral and intellectual beauty ; Shelley's devotion to freedom, therefore, was ardent and sincere. He would have submitted with cheerful alacrity to the greatest sacrifices, had they been demanded of him, to advance the sacred cause of liberty ; and he would have gallantly encountered every peril in the fearless resistance to active oppression. Nevertheless, in ordinary times, although a generous and unhesitating patriot, he was little inclined to consume the pleasant season of youth amidst the intrigues and clamours of elections, and in the dull and selfish cabals of parties. His fancy viewed from a lofty eminence the grand scheme of an ideal republic ; and he could not descend to the humble task of setting out the boundaries of neighbouring rights, and to the uninviting duties of actual administration. He was still less disposed to interest himself in the politics of the day, because he observed the pernicious effects of party zeal in a field where it ought not to enter.

It is no slight evil, but a heavy price paid for popular institutions, that society should be divided into hostile clans to

serve the selfish purposes of a few political adventurers ; and surely to introduce politics within the calm precincts of an university ought to be deemed a capital offence—a felony without benefit of clergy. The undue admission (to borrow the language of universities for a moment) is not less fatal to its existence as an institution designed for the advancement of learning, than the reception of the wooden horse within the walls of Troy was to the safety of that renowned city.

What does it import the interpreters of Pindar and Thucydides—the expositors of Plato and Aristotle—if a few interested persons, for the sake of some lucrative posts, affect to believe that it is a matter of vital importance to the state to concede certain privileges to the Roman Catholics ; whilst others, for the same reason, pretend with tears in their eyes that the concessions would be dangerous, and, indeed, destructive, and shudder with feigned horror, at the harmless proposal ? Such pretexts may be advantageous, and perhaps even honourable, to the ingenious persons who use them for the purposes of immediate advancement ; but of what concernment are they to Apollo and the Muses ? How could the Catholic question augment the calamities of Priam, or diminish the misfortunes of the ill-fated house of Labdacus ? or which of the doubts of the ancient philosophers would the most satisfactory solution of it remove ? Why must the modest student come forth, and dance upon the tight-rope with the mountebanks, since he is to receive no part of the reward, and would not emulate the glory, of those meritorious artists ? Yet did this most inapplicable question mainly contribute to poison the harmless and stupendous felicity which we enjoyed at Oxford.

During the whole period of our residence there, the University was cruelly disfigured by bitter feuds, arising out of the late election of its Chancellor : in an especial manner was our own most venerable college deformed by them, and by angry and senseless disappointment.

Lord Grenville had just been chosen. There could be no more comparison between his scholarship and his various qualifications for the honourable and useless office, and the claims of his unsuccessful opponent, than between the attainments of the best man of the year and those of the huge porter who, with a stern and solemn civility, kept the gates of University College—the arts of mulled-wine and egg-hot being, in the latter case, alone excepted.

The vanquished competitor, however, most unfortunately

for its honour and character, was a member of our college ; and in proportion as the intrinsic merits of our rulers were small, had the vehemence and violence of electioneering been great, that, through the abuse of the patronage of the church, they might attain to those dignities, as the rewards of the activity of partisans, which they could never hope to reach through the legitimate road of superior learning and talents.

Their vexation at failing was the more sharp and abiding, because the only objection that vulgar bigotry could urge against the victor was his disposition to make concessions to the Roman Catholics ; and every dull lampoon about popes, and cardinals, and the scarlet lady, had accordingly been worn threadbare in vain. Since the learned and the liberal had conquered, learning and liberality were peculiarly odious with us at that epoch. The studious scholar, particularly if he were of an inquiring disposition, and of a bold and free temper, was suspected and disliked : he was one of the enemy's troops. The inert and the subservient were the loyal soldiers of the legitimate army of the faith. The despised and scattered nation of scholars is commonly unfortunate ; but a more severe calamity has seldom befallen the remnant of true Israelites than to be led captive by such a generation ! Youth is happy, because it is blithe and healthful, and exempt from care ; but it is doubly and trebly happy, since it is honest and fearless—honourable and disinterested.

In the whole body of undergraduates, scarcely one was friendly to the holder of the loaves and the promiser of the fishes, Lord Eldon. All were eager—all one, and all—in behalf of the scholar and the liberal statesman ; and plain and loud was the avowal of their sentiments. A sullen demeanour towards the young rebels displayed the annoyance arising from the want of success, and from our lack of sympathy ; and it would have demonstrated to the least observant, that, where the Muses dwell, the quarrels and intrigues of political parties ought not to come.

By his family and his connexions, as well as by disposition, Shelley was attached to the successful side ; and although it was manifest that he was a youth of an admirable temper, of rare talents and unwearied industry, and likely, therefore, to shed a lustre upon his college and the University itself ; yet, as he was eminently delighted at that wherewith his superiors were offended, he was regarded from the beginning with a jealous eye.

A young man of spirit will despise the mean spite of sordid minds ; nevertheless, the persecution which a generous soul can condemn, through frequent repetition, too often becomes a severe annoyance in the long course of life ; and Shelley frequently and most pathetically lamented the political divisions which then harassed the University, and were a more fertile source of manifold ills in the wider field of active life. For this reason did he appear to cling more closely to our sweet studious seclusion ; and from this cause, perhaps, principally arose his disinclination—I may say, indeed, his intense antipathy—for the political career that had been proposed to him. A lurking suspicion would sometimes betray itself that he was to be forced into that path, and impressed into the civil service of the state—to become, as it were, a conscript legislator.

A newspaper never found its way to his rooms the whole period of his residence at Oxford ; but when waiting in a bookseller's shop, or at an inn, he would sometimes, although rarely, permit his eye to be attracted by a murder or a storm. Having perused the tale of wonder, or of horror, if it chanced to stray to a political article, after reading a few lines he invariably threw it aside to a great distance ; and he started from his seat, his face flushing, and strode about, muttering broken sentences, the purport of which was always the same : his extreme dissatisfaction at the want of candour and fairness, and the monstrous disingenuousness, which politicians manifest in speaking of the characters and measures of their rivals. Strangers, who caught imperfectly the sense of his indistinct murmurs, were often astonished at the vehemence of his mysterious displeasure.

Once, I remember, a bookseller, the master of a very small shop in a little country town, but apparently a sufficiently intelligent man, could not refrain from expressing his surprise that any one should be offended with proceedings that seemed to him as much in the ordinary course of trade, and as necessary to its due exercise, as the red ligature of the bundle of quills, or the thin and pale brown wrapper which enclosed the quire of letter-paper we had just purchased of him.

A man of talents and learning, who refused to enlist under the banners of any party, and did not deign to inform himself of the politics of the day, or to take the least part or interest in them, would be a noble and a novel spectacle ; but so many persons hope to profit by dissensions, that the merits of such a steady lover of peace would not be duly appreciated, either

by the little provincial bookseller or the other inhabitants of our turbulent country.

The ordinary lectures in our college were of much shorter duration, and decidedly less difficult and less instructive, than the lessons we had received in the higher classes of a public school; nor were our written exercises more stimulating than the oral. Certain compositions were required at stated periods; but, however excellent they might be, they were never commended—however deficient, they were never censured; and, being altogether unnoticed, there was no reason to suppose that they were ever read.

The University at large was not less remiss than each college in particular: the only incitement proposed was an examination at the end of four years. The young collegian might study in private as diligently as he would at Oxford, as in every other place; and if he chose to submit his pretensions to the examiners, his name was set down in the first, the second, or the third class—if I mistake not, there were three divisions—according to his advancement. This list was printed precisely at the moment when he quitted the University for ever;—a new generation of strangers might read the names of the unknown proficient, if they would.

It was notorious, moreover, that, merely to obtain the academical degrees, every new comer, who had passed through a tolerable grammar-school, brought with him a stock of learning, of which the residuum that had not evaporated during four years of dissipation and idleness, would be more than sufficient. The languid course of chartered laziness was ill-suited to the ardent activity and glowing zeal of Shelley.

Since those persons, who were hired at an enormous charge by his own family and by the state to find due and beneficial employment for him, thought fit to neglect this, their most sacred duty, he began forthwith to set himself to work. He read diligently—I should rather say he devoured greedily, with the voracious appetite of a famished man—the authors that roused his curiosity: he discoursed and discussed with energy; he wrote—he began to print—and he designed soon to publish various works.

He begins betimes who begins to instruct mankind at eighteen. The judicious will probably be of opinion that in eighteen years man can scarcely learn how to learn; and that for eighteen more years he ought to be content to learn; and if at the end of the second period he still thinks that he can

impart anything worthy of attention, it is at least early enough to begin to teach. The fault, however, if it were a fault, was to be imputed to the times, and not to the individual, as the numerous precocious effusions of the day attest.

Shelley was quick to conceive, and not less quick to execute. When I called one morning at one, I found him busily occupied with some proofs, which he continued to correct and re-correct with anxious care. As he was wholly absorbed in this occupation, I selected a book from the floor, where there was always a good store, and read in silence, for at least an hour.

My thoughts being as completely abstracted as those of my companion, he startled me by suddenly throwing a paper with some force on the middle of the table, and saying, in a penetrating whisper, as he sprang eagerly from his chair, 'I am going to publish some poems.'

In answer to my inquiries, he put the proofs into my hands. I read them twice attentively, for the poems were very short ; and I told him there were some good lines, some bright thoughts but there were likewise many irregularities and incongruities. I added, that correctness was important in all compositions, but it constituted the essence of short ones ; and that it surely would be imprudent to bring his little book out so hastily ; and then pointed out the errors and defects.

He listened in silence with much attention, and did not dispute what I said, except that he remarked faintly that it would not be known that he was the author, and therefore the publication could not do him any harm.

I answered, that although it might not be disadvantageous to be the unknown author of an unread work, it certainly could not be beneficial.

He made no reply ; and we immediately went out, and strolled about the public walks.

We dined, and returned to his rooms, where we conversed on indifferent subjects. He did not mention his poems, but they occupied his thoughts ; for he did not fall asleep, as usual. Whilst we were at tea, he said abruptly, 'I think you disparage my poems. Tell me what you dislike in them, for I have forgotten.'

I took the proofs from the place where I had left them, and looking over them, repeated the former objections, and suggested others. He acquiesced ; and, after a pause, asked, might they be altered ? I assented.

'I will alter them.'

‘ It will be better to rewrite them ; a short poem should be of the first impression.’

Some time afterwards he anxiously inquired—‘ But in their present form you do not think they ought to be published ? ’

I had been looking over the proofs again, and I answered : ‘ Only as burlesque poetry ’ ; and I read a part, changing it a little here and there.

He laughed at the parody, and begged I would repeat it.

I took a pen and altered it ; and he then read it aloud several times in a ridiculous tone, and was amused by it. His mirth consoled him for the condemnation of his verses, and the intention of publishing them was abandoned.

The proofs lay in his rooms for some days, and we occasionally amused ourselves during an idle moment by making them more and more ridiculous ; by striking out the more sober passages ; by inserting whimsical conceits ; and especially by giving them what we called a dithyrambic character, which was effected by cutting some lines in two, and joining the different parts together that would agree in construction, but were the most discordant in sense.

Although Shelley was of a grave disposition, he had a certain sly relish for a practical joke, so that it were ingenious and abstruse, and of a literary nature ; he would often exult in the successful forgeries of Chatterton and Ireland ; and he was especially delighted with a trick that had lately been played at Oxford, by a certain noble viceroy, at that time an undergraduate, respecting the fairness of which the University was divided in opinion, all the undergraduates accounting it most just, and all the graduates, and especially the bachelors, extremely iniquitous, and indeed popish and jesuitical. A reward is offered annually for the best English essay on a subject proposed : the competitors, send their anonymous essays, each being distinguished by a motto ; when the grave arbitrators have selected the most worthy, they burn the vanquished essays, and open the sealed paper endorsed with a corresponding motto, and containing the name of the victor.

On the late famous contention, all the ceremonies had been duly performed, but the sealed paper presented the name of an undergraduate, who is not qualified to be a candidate, and all the less meritorious discourses of the bachelors had been burnt, together with their sealed papers—so there was to be no bachelor’s prize that year.

When we had conferred a competent absurdity upon the

proofs, we amused ourselves by proposing, but without the intention of executing our project, divers ludicrous titles for the work. Sometimes we thought of publishing it in the name of some one of the chief living poets, or possibly of one of the graver authorities of the day ; and we regaled ourselves by describing his wrathful renunciations, and his astonishment at finding himself immortalized, without his knowledge and against his will : the inability to die could not be more disagreeable even to Tithonus himself ; but how were we to handcuff our ungrateful favourite, that he might not tear off the unfading laurel, which we were to place upon his brow ? I hit upon a title at last, to which the pre-eminence was given, and we inscribed it upon the cover. A mad washerwoman, named Peg Nicholson, had attempted to stab the King, George the Third, with a carving-knife ; the story has long been forgotten, but it was then fresh in the recollection of every one ; it was proposed that we should ascribe the poems to her. The poor woman was still living, and in green vigour within the walls of Bedlam ; but since her existence must be uncomfortable, there could be no harm in putting her to death, and in creating a nephew and administrator to be the editor of his aunt's poetical works.

The idea gave an object and purpose to our burlesque ; to ridicule the strange mixture of sentimentality with the murderous fury of revolutionists, that was so prevalent in the compositions of the day ; and the proofs were altered again to adapt them to this new scheme, but still without any notice of publication. When the bookseller called to ask for the proof, Shelley told him that he had changed his mind, and showed them to him.

The man was so much pleased with the whimsical conceit, that he asked to be permitted to publish the book on his own account ; promising inviolable secrecy, and as many copies *gratis* as might be required : after some hesitation, permission was granted, upon the plighted honour of the trade.

In a few days, or rather in a few hours, a noble quarto appeared ; it consisted of a small number of pages, it is true, but they were of the largest size, of the thickest, the whitest, and the smoothest drawing-paper ; a large, clear, and handsome type had impressed a few lines with ink of a rich glossy black, amidst ample margins. The poor maniac laundress was gravely styled ' the late Mrs. Margaret Nicholson, widow ' ; and the sonorous name of Fitzvictor had been culled for her

inconsolable nephew and administrator ; to add to his dignity, the waggish printer had picked up some huge text types, of so unusual a form, that even an antiquary could not spell the words at the first glance. The effect was certainly striking : Shelley had torn open the large square bundle, before the printer's boy quitted the room, and holding out a copy with both his hands, he ran about in an ecstasy of delight, gazing at the superb title-page.

The first poem was a long one, condemning war in the lump ; piling trash, that might have been written by a quaker, and could only have been published in sober sadness by a society instituted for the diffusion of that kind of knowledge which they deem useful—useful for some end which they have not been pleased to reveal, and which unassisted reason is wholly unable to discover. The MS. had been confided to Shelley by some rhymester of the day, and it was put forth in this shape to astonish a weak mind ; but principally to captivate the admirers of philosophical poetry by the manifest incongruity of disallowing all war, even the most just, and then turning sharp round and recommending the dagger of the assassin as the best cure for all evils, and the sure passport to a lady's favour.

Our book of useful knowledge—the philosopher's own book—contained sundry odes and other pieces, professing an ardent attachment to freedom, and proposing to stab all who were less enthusiastic than the supposed authoress. The work, however, was altered a little, I believe, before the final impression ; but I never read it afterwards, for when an author once sees his book in print, his task is ended, and he may fairly leave the perusal of it to posterity. I have one copy, if not more, somewhere or other, but not at hand. There were some verses, I remember, with a good deal about sucking in them ; to these I objected, as unsuitable to the gravity of an university, but Shelley declared they would be the most impressive of all. There was a poem concerning a young woman, one Charlotte Somebody, who attempted to assassinate Robespierre, or some such person ; and there was to have been a rapturous monologue to the dagger of Brutus. The composition of such a piece was no mean effort of the muse ; it was completed at last, but not in time—as the dagger itself has probably fallen a prey to rust, so the more pointed and polished monologue, it is to be feared, has also perished through a more culpable neglect.

A few copies were sent, as a special favour, to trusty and sagacious friends at a distance, whose gravity would not permit them to suspect a hoax ; they read and admired, being charmed with the wild notes of liberty ; some, indeed, presumed to censure, mildly, certain passages as having been thrown off in too bold a vein. Nor was a certain success wanting—the remaining copies were rapidly sold in Oxford at the aristocratical price of half-a-crown for half-a-dozen pages. We used to meet gownsmen in High Street reading the goodly volume as they walked—pensive with a grave and sage delight—some of them, perhaps, more pensive, because it seemed to portend the instant overthrow of all royalty, from a king to a court-card.

What a strange delusion to admire our stuff—the concentrated essence of nonsense ! It was indeed a kind of fashion to be seen reading it in public, as a mark of a nice discernment, of a delicate and fastidious taste in poetry, and the very criterion of a choice spirit.

Nobody suspected or could suspect, who was the author ; the thing passed off as the genuine production of the would-be regicide. It is marvellous, in truth, how little talent of any kind there was in our famous university in those days ; there was no great encouragement, however, to display intellectual gifts.

The acceptance, as a serious poem, of a work so evidently designed for a burlesque upon the prevailing notion of the day, that revolutionary ruffians were the most fit recipients of the gentlest passions, was a foretaste of the prodigious success, that, a few years later, attended a still more whimsical paradox. Poets had sung already that human ties put Love at once to flight ; that at the sight of civil obligations he spreads his light wings in a moment, and makes default. The position was soon greatly extended, and we were taught, by a noble poet, that even the slightest recognition of the law of nations was fatal to the tender passion ; the very captain of a privateer was pronounced incapable of a pure and ardent attachment ; the feeble control of letters of marque could effectually check the course of affection ; a complete union of souls could only be accomplished under the black flag. Your true lover must necessarily be an enemy of the whole human race—a mere and absolute pirate. It is true, that the tales of the love-sick buccaneers were adorned with no ordinary talent, but the theory is not less extraordinary on that account.

The operation of Peg Nicholson was bland and innoxious ; the next work that Shelley printed was highly deleterious, and was destined to shed a baneful influence over his future progress ; in itself it was more harmless than the former, but it was turned to a deadly poison by the unprovoked malice of fortune.

We had read together attentively several of the metaphysical works that were most in vogue at that time, as Locke *Concerning Human Understanding*, and Hume's *Essays*, particularly the latter, of which we had made a very careful analysis, as was customary with those who read the *Ethics* and the other treatises of Aristotle for their degrees. Shelley had the custody of these papers, which were chiefly in his handwriting, although they were the joint production of both in our common daily studies. From these, and from a small part of them only, he made up a little book, and had it printed, I believe, in the country, certainly not at Oxford. His motive was this. He not only read greedily all the controversial writings on subjects interesting to him, which he could procure, and disputed vehemently in conversation with his friends, but he had several correspondents with whom he kept up the ball of doubt in letters ;—of these he received many, so that the arrival of the postman was always an anxious moment with him. This practice he had learned of a physician, from whom he had taken instructions in chemistry, and of whose character and talents he often spoke with profound veneration. It was, indeed, the usual course with men of learning formerly, as their biographies and many volumes of such epistles testify. The physician was an old man, and a man of the old school ; he confined his epistolary discussions to matters of science, and so did his disciple for some time ; but when metaphysics usurped the place in his affections that chemistry had before held, the latter gradually fell into disceptations respecting existences still more subtle than gases and the electric fluid. The transition, however, from physics to metaphysics was gradual. Is the electric fluid material ? he would ask his correspondent ; is light—is the vital principle in vegetables—in brutes—is the human soul ?

His individual character had proved an obstacle to his inquiries, even whilst they were strictly physical ; a refuted or irritated chemist had suddenly concluded a long correspondence by telling his youthful opponent that he would write to his master, and have him well flogged. The discipline of a public

school, however salutary in other respects, was not favourable to free and fair discussion ; and Shelley began to address inquiries anonymously, or rather, that he might receive an answer, as Philalethes, and the like ; but, even at Eton, the postmen do not ordinarily speak Greek—to prevent mis-carriages, therefore, it was necessary to adopt a more familiar name, as John Short, or Thomas Long.

When he came to Oxford he retained and extended his former practice without quitting the convenient disguise of an assumed name. His object in printing the short abstract of some of the doctrines of Hume was to facilitate his epistolary disquisitions. It was a small pill, but it worked powerfully ; the mode of operation was this :—He enclosed a copy in a letter, and sent it by the post, stating, with modesty and simplicity, that he had met accidentally with that little tract, which appeared unhappily to be quite unanswerable. Unless the fish was too sluggish to take the bait, an answer of refutation was forwarded to an appointed address in London, and then in a vigorous reply he would fall upon the unwary disputant, and break his bones. The strenuous attack sometimes provoked a rejoinder more carefully prepared, and an animated and protracted debate ensued ; the party cited, having put in his answer, was fairly in court, and he might get out of it as he could. The chief difficulty seemed to be to induce the person addressed to acknowledge the jurisdiction, and to plead ; and this, Shelley supposed, would be removed by sending, in the first instance, a printed syllabus instead of written arguments. An accident greatly facilitated his object. We had been talking some time before about geometrical demonstration ; he was repeating its praises, which he had lately read in some mathematical work, and speaking of its absolute certainty and perfect truth.

I said that this superiority partly arose from the confidence of mathematicians, who were naturally a confident race, and were seldom acquainted with any other science than their own ; that they always put a good face upon the matter, detailing their arguments dogmatically and doggedly, as if there was no room for doubt, and concluded, when weary of talking in their positive strain, with Q.E.D. : in which three letters there was so powerful a charm, that there was no instance of any one having ever disputed any argument, or proposition, to which they were subscribed. He was diverted by this remark and often repeated it, saying, if you ask a friend to dinner, and only put Q.E.D. at the end of the invitation, he cannot

refuse to come ; and he sometimes wrote these letters at the end of a common note, in order, as he said, to attain to a mathematical certainty. The potent characters were not forgotten when he printed his little syllabus ; and their efficacy in rousing his antagonists was quite astonishing.

It is certain that the three obnoxious letters had a fertilizing effect, and raised rich crops of controversy ; but it would be unjust to deny, that an honest zeal stimulated divers worthy men to assert the truth against an unknown assailant. The praise of good intention must be conceded ; but it is impossible to accord that of powerful execution also to his antagonists ; this curious correspondence fully testified the deplorable condition of education at that time. A youth of eighteen was able to confute men who had numbered thrice as many years ; to vanquish them on their own ground, although he gallantly fought at a disadvantage by taking the wrong side.

His little pamphlet was never offered for sale ; it was not addressed to an ordinary reader, but to the metaphysician alone ; and it was so short, that it was only designed to point out the line of argument. It was in truth a general issue ; a compendious denial of every allegation, in order to put the whole case in proof ; it was a formal mode of saying, you affirm so and so, then prove it ; and thus was it understood by his more candid and intelligent correspondents. As it was shorter, so was it plainer, and perhaps, in order to provoke discussion, a little bolder, than Hume's *Essays*,—a book which occupies a conspicuous place in the library of every student. The doctrine, if it deserves the name, was precisely similar ; the necessary and inevitable consequence of Locke's philosophy, and of the theory that all knowledge is from without. I will not admit your conclusions, his opponent might answer ; then you must deny those of Hume : I deny them ; but you must deny those of Locke also ; and we will go back together to Plato. Such was the usual course of argument ; sometimes, however, he rested on mere denial, holding his adversary to strict proof, and deriving strength from his weakness.

The young Platonist argued thus negatively through the love of argument, and because he found a noble joy in the fierce shocks of contending minds ; he loved truth, and sought it everywhere, and at all hazards, frankly and boldly, like a man who deserved to find it ; but he also loved dearly victory in debate, and warm debate for its own sake. Never was there a more unexceptionable disputant ; he was eager beyond

the most ardent, but never angry and never personal; he was the only arguer I ever knew who drew every argument from the nature of the thing, and who could never be provoked to descend to personal contentions. He was fully inspired, indeed with the whole spirit of the true logician; the more obvious and indisputable the proposition which his opponent undertook to maintain, the more complete was the triumph of his art if he could refute and prevent him.

To one who was acquainted with the history of our University, with its ancient reputation as the most famous school of logic, it seemed that the genius of the place, after an absence of several generations, had deigned to return at last; the visit, however, as it soon appeared, was ill-timed.

The schoolman of old, who occasionally laboured with technical subtleties to prevent the admission of the first principles of belief, could not have been justly charged with the intention of promoting scepticism; his was the age of minute and astute disceptation, it is true, but it was also the epoch of the most firm, resolute, and extensive faith. I have seen a dexterous fencing-master, after warning his pupil to hold his weapon fast, by a few turns of his wrist throw it suddenly on the ground and under his feet; but it cannot be pretended that he neglected to teach the art of self-defence, because he apparently deprived his scholar of that which is essential to the end proposed. To be disarmed is a step in the science of arms, and whoever has undergone it has already put his foot within the threshold; so is it likewise with refutation.

In describing briefly the nature of Shelley's epistolary contentions, the recollection of his youth, his zeal, his activity, and particularly of many individual peculiarities, may have tempted me to speak sometimes with a certain levity, notwithstanding the solemn importance of the topics respecting which they were frequently maintained. The impression, that they were conducted on his part, or considered by him, with frivolity, or any unseemly lightness, would, however, be most erroneous; his whole frame of mind was grave, earnest, and anxious, and his deportment was reverential, with an edification reaching beyond the age—an age wanting in reverence; an unlearned age; a young age, for the young lack learning. Hume permits no object of respect to remain; Locke approaches the most awful speculations with the same indifference as if he were about to handle the properties of triangles; the small

deference rendered to the most holy things by the able theologian, Paley, is not the least remarkable of his characteristics.

Wiser and better men displayed anciently, together with a more profound erudition, a superior and touching solemnity ; the meek seriousness of Shelley was redolent of those good old times before mankind had been despoiled of a main ingredient in the composition of happiness, a well-directed veneration.

Whether such disputation were decorous or profitable may be perhaps doubtful ; there can be no doubt, however, since the sweet gentleness of Shelley was easily and instantly swayed by the mild influences of friendly admonition, that, had even the least dignified of his elders suggested the propriety of pursuing his metaphysical inquiries with less ardour, his obedience would have been prompt and perfect.

Not only had all salutary studies been long neglected in Oxford at that time, and all wholesome discipline was decayed, but the splendid endowments of the University were grossly abused ; the resident authorities of the college were too often men of the lowest origin, of mean and sordid souls, destitute of every literary attainment, except that brief and narrow course of reading by which the first degree was attained ; the vulgar sons of vulgar fathers, without liberality, and wanting the manners and the sympathies of gentlemen.

A total neglect of all learning, an unseemly turbulence, the most monstrous irregularities, open and habitual drunkenness, vice, and violence, were tolerated or encouraged, with the basest sycophancy, that the prospect of perpetual licentiousness might fill the colleges with young men of fortune ; whenever the rarely exercised power of coercion was exerted, it demonstrated the utter incapacity of our unworthy rulers by coarseness, ignorance, and injustice.

If a few gentlemen were admitted to fellowships, they were always absent ; they were not persons of literary pretensions, or distinguished by scholarship ; and they had no more share in the government of the college than the overgrown guardsmen, who, in long white gaiters, bravely protect the precious life of the sovereign against such assailants as the tenth Muse, our good friend, Mrs. Nicholson.

As the term was drawing to a close, and a great part of the books we were reading together still remained unfinished, we had agreed to increase our exertions and to meet at an early hour.



It was a fine spring morning on Lady-day, in the year 1811, when I went to Shelley's rooms: he was absent; but before I had collected our books he rushed in. He was terribly agitated. I anxiously inquired what had happened.

'I am expelled', he said, as soon as he had recovered himself a little, 'I am expelled! I was sent for suddenly a few minutes ago; I went to the common room, where I found our master, and two or three of the fellows. The master produced a copy of the little syllabus, and asked me if I were the author of it. He spoke in a rude, abrupt, and insolent tone. I begged to be informed for what purpose he put the question. No answer was given; but the master loudly and angrily repeated, "Are you the author of this book?" If I can judge from your manner, I said, you are resolved to punish me, if I should acknowledge that it is my work. If you can prove that it is, produce your evidence; it is neither just nor lawful to interrogate me in such a case and for such a purpose. Such proceedings would become a court of inquisitors, but not free men in a free country. "Do you choose to deny that this is your composition?" the master reiterated in the same rude and angry voice'. Shelley complained much of his violent and ungentlemanlike deportment, saying, 'I have experienced tyranny and injustice before, and I well know what vulgar violence is; but I never met with such unworthy treatment. I told him calmly, but firmly, that I was determined not to answer any questions respecting the publication on the table. He immediately repeated his demand; I persisted in my refusal; and he said furiously, "Then you are expelled; and I desire you will quit the college early to-morrow morning at the latest." One of the fellows took up two papers, and handed one of them to me; here it is'. He produced a regular sentence of expulsion, drawn up in due form, under the seal of the college.

Shelley was full of spirit and courage, frank and fearless; but he was likewise shy, unpresuming, and eminently sensitive. I have been with him in many trying situations of his after-life, but I never saw him so deeply shocked and so cruelly agitated as on this occasion. A nice sense of honour shrinks from the most distant touch of disgrace—even from the insults of those men whose contumely can bring no shame. He sat on the sofa, repeating, with convulsive vehemence, the words, "Expelled, expelled!" his head shaking with emotion, and his whole frame quivering. The atrocious injustice and its

cruel consequences roused the indignation, and moved the compassion, of a friend who then stood by Shelley. He has given the following account of his interference :

‘So monstrous and so illegal did the outrage seem, that I held it to be impossible that any man, or any body of men, would dare to adhere to it ; but, whatever the issue might be, it was a duty to endeavour to the utmost to assist him. I at once stepped forward, therefore, as the advocate of Shelley ; such an advocate, perhaps, with respect to judgment, as might be expected at the age of eighteen, but certainly not inferior to the most practised defenders in good will and devotion. I wrote a short note to the master and fellows, in which, as far as I can remember a very hasty composition after a long interval, I briefly expressed my sorrow at the treatment my friend had experienced, and my hope that they would re-consider their sentence ; since, by the same course of proceeding, myself or any other person, might be subjected to the same penalty, and to the imputation of equal guilt. The note was despatched ; the conclave was still sitting ; and in an instant the porter came to summon me to attend, bearing in his countenance a promise of the reception which I was about to find. The angry and troubled air of men, assembled to commit injustice according to established forms, was then new to me ; but a native instinct told me, as soon as I entered the room, that it was an affair of party ; that whatever could conciliate the favour of patrons was to be done without scruple ; and whatever could tend to impede preferment was to be brushed away without remorse. The glowing master produced my poor note. I acknowledged it ; and he forthwith put into my hand, not less abruptly, the little syllabus. “ Did you write this ? ” he asked, as fiercely as if I alone stood between him and the rich see of Durham. I attempted, submissively, to point out to him the extreme unfairness of the question ; the injustice of punishing Shelley for refusing to answer it ; that if it were urged upon me I must offer the like refusal, as I had no doubt every man in college would—every gentleman, indeed, in the University ; which, if such a course were adopted with all—and there could not be any reason why it should be used with one and not with the rest—would thus be stripped of every member. I soon perceived that arguments were thrown away upon a man possessing no more intellect or erudition, and far less renown, than that famous ram, since translated to the stars

through grasping whose tail less firmly than was expedient, the sister of Phryxus formerly found a watery grave, and gave her name to the broad Hellespont.

'The other persons present took no part in the conversation: they presumed not to speak, scarcely to breathe, but looked mute subserviency. The few resident fellows, indeed, were but so many incarnations of the spirit of the master, whatever that spirit might be. When I was silent, the master told me to retire, and to consider whether I was resolved to persist in my refusal. The proposal was fair enough. The next day, or the next week, I might have given my final answer—a deliberate answer; having in the mean time consulted with older and more experienced persons, as to what course was best for myself and for others. I had scarcely passed the door, however, when I was recalled. The master again showed me the book and hastily demanded whether I admitted, or denied, that I was the author of it. I answered that I was fully sensible of the many and great inconveniences of being dismissed with disgrace from the University, and I specified some of them, and expressed an humble hope that they would not impose such a mark of discredit upon me without any cause. I lamented that it was impossible either to admit, or to deny, the publication—no man of spirit could submit to do so;—and that a sense of duty compelled me respectfully to refuse to answer the question which had been proposed. "Then you are expelled", said the master angrily, in a loud, great voice. A formal sentence, duly signed and sealed was instantly put into my hand: in what interval the instrument had been drawn up I cannot imagine. The alleged offence was a contumacious refusal to disavow the imputed publication. My eye glanced over it, and observing the word *contumaciously*, I said calmly that I did not think that term was justified by my behaviour. Before I had concluded the remark, the master, lifting up the little syllabus, and then dashing it on the table, and looking sternly at me, said, "Am I to understand, sir, that you adopt the principles contained in this work?" or some such words; for, like one red with the suffusion of college port and college ale, the intense heat of anger seemed to deprive him of the power of articulation; by reason of a rude provincial dialect and thickness of utterance, his speech being at all times indistinct. "The last question is still more improper than the former", I replied,—for I felt that the imputation was an insult; "and since, by your own act, you have renounced all

authority over me, our communication is at an end". "I command you to quit my college to-morrow at an early hour." I bowed and withdrew. I thank God I have never seen that man since: he is gone to his bed, and there let him sleep. Whilst he lived, he ate freely of the scholar's bread, and drank from his cup; and he was sustained, throughout the whole term of his existence, wholly and most nobly, by those sacred funds that were consecrated by our pious forefathers to the advancement of learning. If the vengeance of the all-patient and long-contemned gods can ever be roused, it will surely be by some such sacrilege! The favour which he showed to scholars, and his gratitude, have been made manifest. If he were still alive, he would doubtless be as little desirous that his zeal should now be remembered as those bigots who had been most active in burning Archbishop Cranmer could have been to publish their officiousness, during the reign of Elizabeth.'

Busy rumour has ascribed, on what foundation I know not, since an active and searching inquiry has not hitherto been made, the infamy of having denounced Shelley to the pert, meddling tutor of a college of inferior note, a man of an insalubrious and inauspicious aspect. Any paltry fellow can whisper a secret accusation; but a certain courage, as well as malignity, is required by him who undertakes to give evidence openly against another; to provoke thereby the displeasure of the accused, of his family and friends; and to submit his own veracity and his motives to public scrutiny. Hence the illegal and inquisitorial mode of proceeding by interrogation, instead of the lawful and recognized course by the production of witnesses. The disposal of ecclesiastical preferment has long been so reprehensible—the practice of desecrating institutions that every good man desires to esteem most holy is so inveterate—that it is needless to add that the secret accuser was rapidly enriched with the most splendid benefices, and finally became a dignitary of the church. The modest prelate did not seek publicity in the charitable and dignified act of deserving; it is not probable, therefore, that he is anxious at present to invite an examination of the precise nature of his deserts.

The next morning, at eight o'clock, Shelley and his friend set out together for London on the top of a coach; and with his final departure from the University the reminiscences of his life at Oxford terminate. The narrative of the injurious effects of this cruel, precipitate, unjust, and illegal expulsion upon the entire course of his subsequent life would not be wanting in

interest or instruction ; of a period when the scene was changed from the quiet seclusion of academic groves and gardens, and the calm valley of our silvery Isis, to the stormy ocean of that vast and shoreless world, to the utmost violence of which he was, at an early age, suddenly and unnaturally abandoned.

CHAPTER IX

THUS not only were we driven rudely and lawlessly from a common table, spread for us by the provident bounty of our pious and prudent forefathers, where we had an undoubted right to be fed and nurtured ; but my incomparable friend and myself were hunted hastily out of Oxford. The precipitate violence and indecent outrage was the act of our college, not of the University ; the evil-doers seemed to fear that, if we remained among them but a little while, the wrong might be redressed. It is true that I was told, but as it were at the moment of departure, that if it was inconvenient to us to quit the place so suddenly, we might remain for a time ; and that, if Shelley would ask permission of the master to stay for a short period, it would most probably be granted. I immediately informed him of this proposal, but he was far too indignant at the insult which he had received, and at the brutal indignity with which he had been treated, to apply for any favour whatever, even if his life had depended on the concession. The delicacy of a young high-bred gentleman makes him ever most unwilling to intrude, and more especially to remain in any society, where his presence is not acceptable. Nevertheless, I have sometimes regretted, and more particularly for the sake of my gifted friend, to whom the residence at Oxford was exceedingly delightful, and, on all accounts, most beneficial, that we yielded so readily to these modest, retiring feelings. For if licence to remain for some days would have been formally given upon a specific application, no doubt it would have been tacitly allowed ; although no request had been made, permission would have been implied. At any rate it is perfectly certain that force—brute force—would not have been resorted to ; that the police of the University would never have been directed to turn us out of our rooms, and to drive us beyond the gates of our college, roughly casting the poor students' books into the street. The young martyr had never

been told—he never received any admonition, not even the slightest hint, that his speculations were improper, or unpleasant to any one; those persons alone had taken notice of, or a part in, them to whom they were agreeable; persons, who, like himself, relished them, and had a taste for abstruse and, perhaps, unprofitable discussions.

Shelley was, as Ben Jonson says of Sir Kenelm Digby, 'a gentleman absolute in all numbers'. His disposition was gentle and complying, and his deportment eminently gentlemanlike, and which seemed, on all occasions, in a striking manner to claim, one would think irresistibly, to be treated as a gentleman ought to be treated, with courtesy, consideration and kindness:

In peace was never gentle lamb more mild
Than was this young and princely gentleman.

There can be no reasonable doubt that he would at once have acceded to whatever had been proposed to him by authority; he would have forborne everything that was deemed objectionable. In the first instance, surely he should have been admonished once and again; he ought to have been exacted five times at least before the outrageous sentence of outlawry was passed against him.

If he had disregarded repeated admonition (I am confident that he would have yielded to the first monitor) the milder punishment of rustication should have been first tried. To have been banished from Oxford, for a term or two, would have been a less immoderate chastisement, and it would have been deeply felt by an ingenuous youth to whom a college life was in all respects suitable, and indeed charming; who seemed to be one of those modest, studious, recluse persons for whose special behalf universities and colleges were founded and are maintained.

Our college was denominated University College, but Liberty Hall would have been a more correct and significant name. Universal laziness was the order of the day, except so far as half-a-dozen scholars were concerned, who subsisted, in some measure, on eleemosynary foundations, and were no acquisition to the society; such people being usually the vulgar relatives or friends of the vulgar authorities of the place. In the evening unceasing drunkenness and continual uproar prevailed.

The observation, therefore, was not less just than happy,

that our college must have been founded, not by King Alfred, as was asserted, but by his foes, the Danes ; by barbarians, who quaffed mead to furious intoxication out of the skulls of their enemies ; all men being accounted such who would read and write, or who had an inclination for such pursuits. The disorder was, in truth, intolerable. The perpetual intoxication doubtless was profitable, if not to the interests of learning and education, to the Oxford vintners ; to vintagers, that from the fruit of the white blossomed sloe,

Crushed the black poison of misused wine.

To ascribe a college to a particular county, or district, is to devote it at once to vulgarity and barbarism ; and fellowships, and other foundations, confined to some particular county or school, are invariably ill-bestowed, wasted, and thrown away.

This was our unfortunate position, and to a striking degree—in an excess—the milk of bounty had turned sour, our aliment was corrupted, our natural nutriment most unnaturally had become poison ! In such a state of things nothing seemed to be forbidden ; the notion that every one might follow his own devices, and do whatever he pleased, was perhaps a mistake ; but it was a natural and surely a pardonable one. It ought to have been corrected by salutary precept and admonition, not blindly and fiercely chastised and overwhelmed by injustice, indignity, and insult. But it was necessary that the divine poet should fulfil his destinies ; his high vocation was to be before and above his age. It was inevitable, and he could not but pursue it !

One thing, at least, is certain, that I bear them no ill-will ; on the contrary, I earnestly desire to return good for evil—and indeed the greatest of all good—viz., to reform their famous and admirable university ; to reform it effectually and thoroughly, so that it may be a credit to themselves and a blessing to the country and to posterity ; and I feel strongly that it is my vocation to do this.

I heard an anecdote which may be repeated now, for it can never be out of place, respecting the University of Oxford, from a venerable friend who had resided many years in Italy ; at Venice and Padua. The greater part of his time he had spent at the latter remarkable and interesting city, and he had long been intimate with the professors of its celebrated university. Some of them he had found to be truly learned

and liberal-minded men ; of one professor in particular—I regret that I have forgotten his name—he often spoke with admiration, and related many things concerning him highly to his credit.

This gentleman had long been animated by an honourable curiosity to inform himself touching the condition of the other universities of Europe, and for several years had employed his leisure and vacations in visiting the most renowned of these institutions. He obtained introductions to the principal authorities at each seat of learning, and had been passed, duly furnished with letters of recommendation, from one university to another.

The Paduan professor had remained some weeks at Oxford, and had conversed with the principal persons. He said that he had been forcibly struck there with two very remarkable peculiarities, neither of which he had ever met with in any other university. The first was this : wherever he went it had been his practice to inquire, Whom do you consider as the first man among you in learning and talent ? Who is the second ? And who is your third ? In every other university he had received a prompt and decided answer to these questions ; here and there he had met with some difference of opinion as to the name which ought to rank as the third—but as to the first and second, they had been everywhere unanimous ; and certainly his three questions had everywhere received an immediate and unhesitating answer. But at Oxford, and at Oxford only, as if they were all in a conspiracy together—the phrase is the professor’s—to keep it a profound secret, nobody would ever even tell him who stood first. In what way, in what walk of science, in what department, in what branch of knowledge ? Pray, tell me who is the first among you in any way ? There was no answer ; they all stood mute. Why was this ?

The second remarkable peculiarity was this,—and, the professor added, it made the first peculiarity still more striking and peculiar. At every other mart of learning he had often heard the answer ‘I do not know’ ; but at Oxford, never. Elsewhere I have asked a professor of astronomy some question regarding anatomy, or botany, and he had the courage and honesty at once frankly to answer, ‘I do not know’. But at Oxford it really seemed as if everybody considered himself equally bound to be universal, to know everything, and to be able to give some sort of affirmative answer to ev

question, however foreign it might be to his ordinary and proper pursuits. There is so much wisdom in answering seasonably, 'I do not know', that in an university which has been celebrated, and accounted most wise for nine or ten centuries, I thought, for the credit of the place, I ought to get it once, at least, before I went away; so I tried hard, but I could never obtain it. Why was this?

I had called Oxford 'a seat of learning'. 'Why do you call it so?' Shelley asked warmly; 'you have no right to call it so; such a place cannot be a seat of learning!' 'Yes, it is a seat of learning, and I have a right to call it so. It is a seat in which learning sits very comfortably, well thrown back, as in an easy chair, and sleeps so soundly, that neither you, nor I, nor anybody else, can wake her'.

It has been affirmed by ardent spirits—and not, perhaps, altogether without some show of reason—that if any of the scholars be suffered to quit Eton without a moderate, but lively feeling of religion, the authorities of that famous seminary ought to be scourged to death. And, moreover, that if a single student be permitted to depart from the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge, unimbued with genuine piety, the appliances of both universities, and especially of the former, being duly estimated, the heads of houses, the professors and tutors, deserve to be impaled alive, with their cold Bampton Lectures, tame unedifying discourses, evidences, probabilities, credibilities, and the whole farrago of frigid rationalism, suspended round their necks. The Oxford Tracts, however, have of late years somewhat redeemed the character of this ancient and renowned school of orthodox theology; had it been the fate of my incomparable friend to have met with these, or rather with some of them, with how much delight and instruction would he not have perused and profited by them.

Some slight advances have unquestionably been recently made towards removing the stigma of utter uselessness with which the University of Oxford has been branded; until lately it seemed to exist only for the discouragement of learning. For many years I desired, I trust, with no illiberal curiosity, and for a long time I desired it eagerly, to consult certain Greek and other MSS., deposited in the Bodleian and other libraries. I ventured sometimes to hint my wish to persons who were in a position to have granted it very easily; but I found no encouragement. At the best I was told, that

if I went to Oxford, and procured the recommendation of some Master of Arts, I might enter those well-closed depositories, as others might, and could do as they did ; what this was, I could never discover ; probably to return as wise as they came. The scanty information, costively imparted, tempted me only to postpone indefinitely the gratification of my wishes.

We had determined to quit Oxford immediately (this probably was a mistake), being under the ban of an absurd and illegal sentence. Having breakfasted together, the next morning, March 26, 1811, we took our places on the outside of a coach, and proceeded to London.

We put up for the night at some coffee-house near Piccadilly, and dined ; and then we went to take tea in Lincoln's Inn Fields with Shelley's cousins. Here we passed a very silent evening ; the cousins were taciturn people—the maxim of the family appeared to be, that a man should hold his tongue and save his money. I was a stranger ; Bysshe (I heard him called by that name then for the first time ; he was always called so by his family, probably to propitiate the old baronet) —Bysshe attempted to talk, but the cousins held their peace, and so conversation remained cousin-bound. At a coffee-house one can read nothing but a newspaper ; this did not suit us ; we went out after breakfast to look for lodgings.

We found several sets which seemed to me sufficiently comfortable, but in this matter Bysshe was rather fanciful. We entered a pleasant parlour—a man in the street vociferated, ' Mackerel, fresh macheral ! ' or ' Muscles ! lilywhite muscles ! ' Shelley was convulsed with horror, and, clapping his hands on his ears, rushed wildly out of doors. At the next house we were introduced to a cheerful little first floor, the window was open, a cart was grinding leisurely along, the driver suddenly cracked his whip, and Shelley started ; so that would not do. At one place he fell in dudgeon with the maid's nose ; at another he took umbrage at the voice of the mistress. Never was a young beauty so hard to please, so capricious ! I began to grow tired of the vain pursuit. However, we came to Poland Street ; it reminded him of Thaddeus of Warsaw and of freedom. We must lodge there, should we sleep even on the step of a door. A paper in a window announced lodgings ; Shelley took some objection to the exterior of the house, but we went in, and this time auspiciously.

There was a back sitting-room on the first floor, some

dark, but quiet ; yet quietness was not the principal attraction. The walls of the room had lately been covered with trellised paper ; in those days it was not common. There were trellises, vine leaves with their tendrils, and huge clusters of grapes, green and purple, all represented in lively colours. This was delightful ; he went close up to the wall, and touched it : ' We must stay here ; stay for ever ! ' There was some debate about a second bedroom, and the authorities were consulted below ; he was quite uneasy, and eyed the cheerful paper wistfully during the consultation. We might have another bedroom ; it was upstairs. That room, of course, was to be mine. Shelley had the bedroom opening out of the sitting-room ; this also was overspread with the trellised paper. He touched the wall and admired it.

' Do grapes really grow in that manner anywhere ? '

' Yes, I believe they do ! '

' We will go and see them then, soon ; we will go together ! '

' Then we shall not stay here for ever ! '

When could we have the lodgings ? Now, immediately. We brought our luggage in a hackney-coach. I had ordered a fire ; to this he rather objected in a plaintive voice, staring pitiously at the ripe clusters, and seeming actually to feel the genial warmth of the sweet South ; but we were still in March, and had the grapes been real grapes, a cheerful fire was indispensable. The weather was fine ; we took long walks together as before, and we dined at some coffee-house, wherever we might chance to find ourselves at dinner time, and returned to the trellised room to tea.

We walked one day to Wandsworth, where some of his younger sisters were at school. At that time Bysshe had a warm affection for his mother, and was passionately fond of his sisters. I remained outside, whilst he went into the house for a little while. When we stopped at the gate, a little girl, eight or ten years old, with long, light locks streaming over her shoulders, was scampering about. ' Oh ! there is little Helen ! ' the young poet screamed out with rapturous delight. On our return he informed me, that the pretty child was his third sister, and he then first told me the object of our walk ; for he took a pocketful of cakes to a school-girl with as much mystery as Pierre and Jaffier plotted against the government of Venice. We read much together, and often read aloud to each other, leading a quiet, happy life. But Shelley was not

so comfortable as he had been at Oxford ; a college life, with its manifold conveniences and all its appliances and aptitudes for study, exactly suited him.

As far as concerned myself, who have always been, to a great extent, a citizen of the world, it mattered little. I have long since forgiven them, if I had anything to forgive ; but I can never pardon ' the heavy-gaited toads ' for the slights which they put upon my incomparable friend, and for the injuries and insults which they had so basely heaped on his unoffending head.

At that time *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* attracted much attention. We had not yet seen it. Shelley bought the poem one morning—a pretty little volume—at a bookseller's shop in Oxford Street. He put it under his arm, and we walked into the country ; when we were sufficiently removed from observation, he began to read it aloud. He read the whole poem aloud to me with fervid and exulting energy, and all the notes. He was greatly delighted with the bitter, wrathful satire. There are good things in it—some strong and striking passages—but it did not much please me ; it is full of pride, of hot, weak impatient indignation. I never read it myself, I only heard it read once during this country walk, and I never saw the volume again. When he had finished it, he put it into his pocket hastily, or perhaps rather intended to do so, and missed his pocket, or—and it was no uncommon case with him—his pocket had been torn out, or there was a hole at the bottom, for, when we got home, the book had disappeared. The poem afterwards became exceedingly scarce, so that a large price was often given for a copy, and some curious persons even took the trouble to transcribe it. I have met with such MSS. Such was his first introduction to Byron ; such his first acquaintance with his brother poet, for he had never read those early attempts which were the moving cause of the furious onslaught.

Notwithstanding his admiration of the poem, he did not express, as was his course whenever he was pleased with any work, a desire or determination to become personally acquainted with the author. He did not foresee that their lives would be blended and bound up together, as they were subsequently ; still less did he anticipate that the irate satirist would be his executor, and as such, at the expiration of a few short years, would preside at obsequies, so strange, so mournful ! To us, blind mortals, ignorant of the future, this present life is h

to be borne. If we knew what is to come, it would be absolutely intolerable !

We occasionally visited the cousins in Lincoln's Inn Fields again, to tea, or to dinner. They were mute as before, and we met other cousins, not less reserved and retiring.

John G—— took us one Sunday morning into Kensington Gardens. We had never been there before. Bysshe was charmed with the sylvan—and in those days somewhat neglected—aspect of the place. It soon became, and always continued to be, a favourite resort. In the more retired parts of the gardens he especially delighted, and particularly in one dark nook where there were many old yew-trees.

One day we were invited to dine in Garden Court. Shelley, J. G., and myself, repaired thither. On our way I stepped to look at an object, which, so to say, I have seen every day of my life since, that is, for some fifty years, but which was then new to me. I had seen fountains represented in books, in views of old-fashioned mansions, but, I think, I had never actually set my eyes on one before.

'How many dukes shall we have to-day, Bysshe ?' John G—— asked.

'Several, no doubt.'

I quitted the fountain, and considered much within myself what this question could mean. Having ascended pretty high, we arrived at the chambers of our host, and were welcomed. Two or three persons were there already. We were introduced to them, but of these none were dukes—not one. We had a comfortable dinner

Of steaks, and other Temple messes,
Which some neat-handed Phillis dresses.

We heard them hissing in a small kitchen adjoining our dining room, and Phillis brought them in, hot and hot. I still thought about the dukes, but I soon discovered what John G—— meant. No dukes were mentioned, but several marchionesses, countesses, and baronesses were named, at whose parties Tom had figured lately, and who were excessively flattered and gratified when they were assured of the satisfaction with their arrangements which he had condescendingly expressed. After dinner there was some port wine, and much conversation ; it rolled chiefly on the superiority of women. Bysshe spoke with great animation of their purity, disinterestedness,

generosity, kindness, and the like. I supported him humbly and feebly, by affirming, that girls, as far as my observation went, learned more readily than boys, especially the mathematical sciences; that they had not the same repugnance to receive instruction—not the same antipathy to learning, but were happy to be taught.

John G——, a surgeon, said, the female sex had been unfairly treated; they had an undue share of pain, and sickness, and suffering, which they bore with an amount of patience and fortitude, of which men were incapable.

Most of these assertions met with warm opposition; one fierce little man in particular got wonderfully angry. 'When I take to myself a wife, do you suppose I shall allow her to set herself up, as being cleverer than myself? No, indeed, I will just get a horsewhip, and I will soon beat her conceit out of her! You may take my word for it!'

His word was taken, but his arguments, if such they might be called, did not go for much.

Byshe was disgusted with him, and in walking home, remarked: 'Since mild expostulations were unavailing, the fellow' (so he termed the choleric little gentleman) 'ought to have been thrown out of the window. What do you think, John?'

'I think, if that had been done, we should probably have had some very pretty cases of compound fractures!'

Shelley took me one Sunday to dine with his father, by invitation, at Miller's hotel, over Westminster Bridge. We breakfasted early, and sallied forth, taking, as usual, a long walk. He told me that his father would behave strangely, and that I must be prepared for him; and he described his ordinary behaviour on such occasions. I thought the portrait was exaggerated, and I told him so; he assured me that it was not.

Shelley had, generally, one volume at least in his pocket, whenever he went out to walk. He produced a little book, and read various passages from it aloud. It was an unfavourable and unfair criticism on the Old Testament, some work of Voltaire's if I mistake not, which he had lately picked up on a stall. He found it amusing, and read many pages aloud to me, laughing heartily at the excessive and extravagant ridicule of the Jewish nation, their theocracy, laws, and peculiar usages.

We arrived at the appointed hour of five at the hotel,

dinner had been postponed until six. Mr. Graham, whom I had seen before, was there. Mr. Timothy Shelley received me kindly ; but he presently began to talk in an odd, unconnected manner ; scolding, crying, swearing, and then weeping again : no doubt, he went on strangely.

'What do you think of my father ?' Shelley whispered to me.

I had my head filled with the book which I had heard read aloud all the morning, and I whispered in answer : 'Oh, he is not your father. It is the God of the Jews ; the Jehovah you have been reading about !'

Shelley was sitting at the moment, as he often used to sit, quite on the edge of his chair. Not only did he laugh aloud, with a wild, demoniacal burst of laughter, but he slipped from his seat, and fell on his back at full length on the floor.

'What is the matter, Bysshe ? Are you ill ? are you dead ? are you mad ? Why do you laugh ?'

It was not easy to return a satisfactory answer to his father, or to Mr. Graham, who came to raise him from the ground ; but the announcement of dinner put an end to the confusion.

We dined comfortably. Some time after dinner, Bysshe had gone out on an errand for his father,—I think, to order post-horses for the next morning. The father addressed me thus :

'You are a very different person, sir, from what I expected to find ; you are a nice, moderate, reasonable, pleasant gentleman. Tell me what you think I ought to do with my poor boy ? He is rather wild, is he not ?'

'Yes, rather'.

'Then, what am I to do ?'

'If he had married his cousin, he would perhaps have been less so. He would have been steadier'.

'It is very probable that he would'.

'He wants somebody to take care of him : a good wife. What if he were married ?'

'But how can I do that ? It is impossible ; if I were to tell Bysshe to marry a girl, he would refuse directly. I am sure he would ; I know him so well'.

'I have no doubt that he would refuse, if you were to order him to marry ; and I should not blame him. But if you were to bring him in contact with some young lady, who, you believed, would make him a suitable wife, without saying

anything about marriage, perhaps he would take a fancy to her ; and if he did not like her, you could try another'.

Mr. Graham then interposed, and said that was an excellent plan, and Mr. Shelley conversed with him for some time in a low voice. They went over a list of young women of their acquaintance. I did not know these ladies even by name, so I paid little attention to their conversation, which terminated suddenly when Bysshe returned.

Another bottle of port was proposed, for the honourable member, whatever his merits or defects might be, was jolly and hospitable.

'They have older wine in this house, than any they have brought us yet ; let us have a bottle of that !'

Nobody was inclined to drink more wine, and therefore we had tea. Mr. Graham made tea ; he was Mr. Shelley's factotum, and he was always civil and attentive.

After tea our jovial host became characteristic again ; he discoursed of himself and his own affairs ; he cried, laughed, scolded, swore, and praised himself at great length. He was so highly respected in the House of Commons : he was respected by the whole House, and by the Speaker in particular, who told him that they could not get on without him. He assured us that he was greatly beloved in Sussex. Mr. Graham assented to all this. He was such an excellent magistrate. He told a very long story, how he had lately committed two poachers : 'You know the fellows, Graham, you know who they are'.

Mr. Graham assented.

'And when they got out of prison, one of them came and thanked me'.

Why the poacher was so grateful the worthy magistrate did not inform us.

'There is certainly a God', he then said ; 'there can be no doubt of the existence of a Deity ; none whatever'.

Nobody present expressed any doubt.

'You have no doubt on the subject, sir, have you ?' he inquired, addressing himself particularly to me.

'None whatever.'

'If you have, I can prove it to you in a moment'.

'I have no doubt.'

'But perhaps you would like to hear my argument ?'

'Very much'.

'I will read it to you, then'.

He felt in several pockets, and at last drew out a sheet of letter-paper, and began to read.

Bysshe, leaning forward, listened with profound attention. 'I have heard this argument before', he said; and, by-and-bye turning to me, he said again, 'I have heard this argument before'.

'They are Paley's arguments', I said.

'Yes!' the reader observed, with much complacency, turning towards me, 'you are right, sir', and he folded up the paper, and put it into his pocket: 'they are Paley's arguments; I copied them out of Paley's book this morning myself: but Paley had them originally from me; almost everything in Paley's book he had from me'.

When we parted, Mr. Shelley shook hands with me in a very friendly manner. 'I am very sorry you would not have any more wine. I should have liked much to have drunk a bottle of the old wine with you. Tell me the truth, I am not such a bad fellow after all, am I?'

'By no means'.

'Well, when you come to see me at Field Place, you will find that I am not'.

We parted thus; he lived just thirty-three years longer, but we never met again. I have sometimes thought that if he had been taken the right way, things might have gone better; but this his son, Bysshe, could never do, for his course, like that of true love, was not to run smooth.

'Paley's arguments! Paley's books!' I said to my friend, as we walked home.

'Yes; my father always will call him Paley; why does he call him so?'

'I do not know, unless it be to rhyme to Sally'.

After a deep, long-drawn sigh he exclaimed: 'Oh, how I wish you would come to Field Place! How I wish my father would invite you again, and you would come! You would set us all to rights, for you know how to put everybody in good humour'.

The real author of the meagre and inconclusive treatises, which had been published under the name of Paley, and had been erroneously received, as being the compositions of the Archdeacon of Carlisle, was manifestly fond of making a fuss, of attracting attention to himself and his concerns, and of filling a space in the eyes of so much of the public as could be induced to attend to his manifestations.

As a senator, an integral portion of the collective wisdom, he loved, if not in the honourable house, at least out of doors, to move standing orders, to carry resolutions, by which nothing was resolved, to give notices, to record protests, and, in one word, to give full play to the whole machinery of pompous folly. To draw up protocols, like an accomplished statesman, as he was, to pen diplomatic notes, to sketch the outline of treaties, and to submit propositions and articles of capitulation provisionally ; all these devices and many more, he tried on with my family. But his success was small ; for, although Mr. Speaker, as he said, could not get through the business of the Session without his powerful aid, he appeared to us all to be a bore of the first magnitude, and a serious impediment to the carrying into effect any ordinary arrangements. His talents and proficiency, in this line, will be best shown by a few specimens of his letters which I found amongst my father's papers after his death. The epistles of the beloved Timothy will speak for themselves.

To take umbrage at the poor man's noise and nonsense certainly appears to be no common weakness ; to drink a bottle or two of the old port with him, to suffer him to go on in his own way and to talk himself to sleep, and then to take one's own course, would seem to be the easiest thing in the world ; but, to a young man of genius, of transcendent talents, and of a fancy divinely poetic, nothing is difficult, except to keep in the well-worn ruts and beaten road of civil life. It is only fair to the poor old governor to add, that he was the kind master of old and attached servants, and that his surviving children speak of him at this hour with affection.

FIELD PLACE, *March 27, 1811.*

SIR,

The invitation, my son wrote me word, that you would accept to spend the Easter vacation at Field Place,—I am sorry to say the late occurrence at University College must of necessity preclude me that pleasure, as I shall have to bear up against the affliction that such a business has occasioned.

I am your very humble servant,

T. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *April 5, 1811.*

SIR,

I have the honour to address you upon the subject of

the unfortunate affair that has happened to my son and yours, at University College, Oxford. I have endeavoured to part them by directing my son to return home, and also giving the same advice to your son ; and backed by that opinion by men of rank and influence, therefore I would suggest to you to come to London, and try our joint endeavours for that purpose.

I have not seen your son, nor have I as yet seen my own, but I must do so very soon.

They are at No. 15, Poland Street, Oxford Road. Have the goodness to address me Miller's Hotel, Westminster Bridge. I am at a loss now to know whom I address, not being able to get the direction. These youngsters must be parted, and the fathers must exert themselves. The favour of your answer will oblige. Should I be in the country when you come up, I can very soon be here.

I have the honour to be, sir,

Your very obedient, humble servant,

T. SHELLEY.

Sir James Graham tells me there are several of the name, therefore into whosever's hands this comes, will have the goodness to find out the right person.

To — Hogg, Esq., Stockton-on-Tees.

MILLER'S HOTEL, *April 5, 1811.*

MY DEAR BOY,

I am unwilling to receive and act on the information you gave me on Sunday, as the ultimate determination of your mind. The disgrace which hangs over you is most serious, and though I have felt as a father, and sympathized in the misfortune which your criminal opinions and improper acts have begot ; yet, you must know, that I have a duty to perform to my own character, as well as to your young brother and sisters. Above all, my feelings as a Christian require from me a decided and firm conduct towards you.

If you shall require aid or assistance from me—or any protection—you must please yourself to me :

1st. To go immediately to Field Place, and to abstain from all communication with Mr. Hogg, for some considerable time.

2nd. That you shall place yourself under the care and society of such gentleman as I shall appoint, and attend to his instructions and directions he shall give.

These terms are so necessary to your well-being, and to the

value which I cannot but entertain, that you may abandon your errors and present unjustifiable and wicked opinions, that I am resolved to withdraw myself from you, and leave you to the punishment and misery that belongs to the wicked pursuit of an opinion so diabolical and wicked as that which you have dared to declare, if you shall not accept the proposals. I shall go home on Thursday.

I am your affectionate

And most afflicted Father,

T. SHELLEY.

To P. B. S.

MILLER'S HOTEL, *April 6, 1811.*

SIR,

Since I wrote yesterday, I find that I did not address the letter right, yet it may reach you. However, as I am just come from Mr. Wharton, who told me that you lived at Norton, near Stockton, I have only to urge you to get your young man home. They want to get into professions together. If possible they must be parted, for such monstrous opinions that occupy their thoughts are by no means in their favour.

I hope you have received my letter of yesterday, and will take immediate means of acting as you think proper. This is a most deplorable case, and I fear we shall have much trouble to root it out.

Paley's Natural Theology I shall recommend my young man to read, it is extremely applicable. I shall read it with him. A father so employed, must impress his mind more sensibly than a stranger. I shall exhort him to divest himself of all prejudice already imbibed from his false reasoning, and to bring a willing mind to a work so essential to his own and his family's happiness.

I understand you have more children. God grant they may turn out well, and this young man see his error.

I remain your obedient

And afflicted Fellow-sufferer,

T. SHELLEY.

To John Hogg, Esq., Norton.

FIELD PLACE, *April 14, 1811.*

SIR,

This morning I received a letter from my son, who said, he and Mr. Hogg junior had submitted proposals to Mr.

Hogg, who had done them the honour of expressing his approbation of them, with the condition of mine.

I found I could do no more with either of them, and as the letter came from the Rev. Mr. F., whose character must be mild and benevolent indeed ; yet I consider it right to give my business into Mr. W.'s hands, to guard my honour and character in case of any prosecutions in the Courts, and to direct my son to do what was right in the first instance, so he will now.

Mr. Hogg must be deceived, if he agrees to the proposals. Indeed, what right have these opinionated youngsters to do any such thing ? Undutiful and disrespectful to a degree ! viz. :

The parties think it their duty to *demand* an unrestrained correspondence.

When Mr. T. J. H. enters at the inns of Court, or commences any other profession, that Mr. P. B. Shelley may be permitted to select that intention in life, which may be consonant with his intentions, to which he may judge his abilities adequate.

Surely, sir, Mr. Hogg never could agree to such insolence.

I beg my compliments to Mr. Hogg, and hope he will be firm and decided with these misguided youngsters.

I am, sir, your very humble servant,

T. SHELLEY.

Desire Mr. Hogg junior to inform you of our conversation, etc., last Sunday. You say the person's name is Clarke, where you lodge.

To Mr. R. C.

(On the part of John Hogg, Esq.)

Such were our venerable friend's letters of business. With regard to his literary correspondence, a few words may be said. He was not 'an illiterate country gentleman', as he has been styled, most incorrectly ; he certainly was not a man of letters or of learning, but he was not without literary tastes and dispositions. In his frequent letters to my friend, and in discourse with him, he constantly urged his son to acquire knowledge, to read hard, and particularly to distinguish himself at the University. He proposed to him to enter into competition for a prize poem ; and, to enable him the better to make the attempt, he induced a distinguished scholar, a considerable antiquary and an eminent man, the Rev. Edward Dallaway, vicar of Leatherhead, secretary to the Earl Marshal,

and the historian of the county of Sussex, to furnish in a long letter, accompanied with sketches, much valuable information, relative to a subject which had been offered by the University. Shelley actually began to compose the poem, but he did not complete it, because he was sent away from Oxford before the time arrived for submitting his attempt to the judges of poetic superiority.

His father's epistles to Shelley invariably commenced with, 'My dear boy', like the celebrated Letters of the Earl of Chesterfield to his Son, and indeed the writer hinted pretty plainly, that he closely resembled the noble Earl in elegance and accomplishments, as well as in worldly wisdom. The letters were very peculiar: he began with one subject, and always suddenly broke off, sometimes even in the middle of a sentence, and entered upon, or rather went on with, a totally different topic; as if he had laid aside the letter, and on taking it up again after an interval, had finished it, without recollecting at all, or referring to, what he had previously written. They were exactly like letters that had been cut in two, and the pieces afterwards joined at hazard; cross readings, as it were, cross questions and crooked answers. Shelley gave me some samples as epistolary curiosities; I regret that I have mislaid them, so that I cannot, at present, exhibit—'disjecti membra poetæ'—the members of sentences of the 'tattered and torn' father of a poet. Not unfrequently did these instructive missives scold the 'dear boy',—scold him nobly, gloriously, royally, for Bysshe provoked his somewhat irritable parent, and often unintentionally:

Where furious *Frank* and fiery Hun.

Furious letters, franked by the fiery Hun himself, came to us from Horsham. This silly verse from silly Tom Campbell's silly poem, *Hohenlinden*, was applied to them, and it somewhat consoled the scolded one. He affirmed, that the application was in Ciceronian phrase, 'haud illepidum', not unfunny; thereby meaning exceedingly droll.

It is certain, however, that 'the late occurrence at University College', as Mr. Shelley mildly terms the stupid outrage perpetrated upon his son, because an innocent and insignificant thesis had been propounded for the delectation of lovers of logomachy, of logical quirks, and of subtle, metaphysical quibbles, annoyed him greatly; and it is equally certain that, in his political position, as a constitutional whig, there was

some foundation for his annoyance. As to my own family, and my immediate connections, we were all persons whose first toast after dinner was, invariably, 'Church and State!'—warm partisans of William Pitt, of the highest Church, and of the high Tory party; consequently, we were anything but intolerant—we were above suspicion, above ordinances. I speak of the Tories of the good old times—of fine old English gentlemen of the old school—of men who wore the Windsor uniform before Peel and his Manchester men had mixed their shoddy with the sound, home-grown wool of honest Yorkshire broadcloth! My relatives felt that they had margin enough—plenty of sea-room, that whatever might be said or done, their good principles could not be doubted, but would always carry them through. With the buff and blue folks it was far otherwise; they had already gone to what they conceived to be the extreme verge of free opinions and practices, yet without having gone far enough to satisfy the demands of many of their adherents; and they were obliged to stand trembling and shivering at the farthest point of liberality, and were apparently in constant dread of having actually ventured to take a position in which they might have done themselves and their followers some real service. These people feared lest they should, peradventure, be accounted Republicans, Jacobins, Levellers, Atheists.

If the *Age of Reason* had been re-published by myself or by one of my earliest friends, the world would have supposed that it was put forth merely to show the utter futility and impotence, and vanity of the author's arguments; or in order to invite a more complete and conclusive refutation than Bishop Watson and the other feeble champions of the faith had hitherto produced. Whereas, if the heroes of Whiggery—Grey and Grenville—and the small wits of Holland House, had sent the decried work into general circulation, men would have exclaimed with one voice—they have thrown off the mask at last, and have come forward, openly professing to be such as we always thought they were.

The good old adage says, and says truly—One man may steal a horse with impunity, whilst another must not even look over the hedge. It was not wonderful that the clients of the poor Duke of Norfolk, who, it was currently reported, had gotten woefully into the wrong box, and into sad disgrace, by proposing, as a toast at a public dinner, 'The Majesty of the People!'—should be nervously apprehensive, lest another

decisive step should be taken in the same wrong and dangerous direction.

Much has been said and written about the intolerance and persecution of Priests, and if the word Priest be used to denote those gentry who presided over the Spanish Inquisition and other similar establishments, the complaint, if there be any truth in history, would seem to be but too well founded. But with regard to clergymen of the established church, in justice to them, I am bound by gratitude to declare, that I never met with anything at their hands but kindness, hospitality, and liberality, and not merely towards myself alone ; and, I believe, I never merited any other treatment from them ; but with reference also to my illustrious friend, who was doubtless represented sometimes—for the most part falsely—as having evinced a certain hostility towards their order. It is only right, therefore, to add, that no individual of the English clergy ever spoke of him to me save in terms of respect ; fully and freely acknowledging his remarkable talents, and readily conceding, that young men of genius, and of active and inquiring minds, frequently encounter serious doubts and difficulties at the commencement of their studies, which farther progress and perseverance in learning, and a more mature judgment, finally solve and gradually dissipate. If I have ever heard my friend treated unhandsomely and contemptuously, it has been by ignorant and bigoted sectaries, these being, in matters of faith and religious doctrine, commonly of the lowest denomination.

I am constrained, however, to except, from this honourable testimony, the paltry and pitiful persecution which he suffered at Oxford ; which, paltry and pitiful as it unquestionably was, must, nevertheless, be duly expiated. The narrow society of our small college was degraded and brutalized by habitual drunkenness, or by the habitual toleration of it in others ; if a hungry young soul had been led forth to pasture upon less barren lands, and under the guidance of truer shepherds, than were those who brought eternal infamy upon the foundations of the great and good Alfred, the result, at least to ordinary apprehensions, would have been most probably less unsatisfactory.

Shelley was caught one day at Oxford by a violent shower, and a furious and sudden storm of wind ; he took shelter under some of the buildings of a college—if I mistake not, Wadham. A gentleman saw him from a window, and invited him to come

and sit in his rooms until the rain should cease. He did so ; and they had a long and interesting conversation. The stranger spoke of metaphysical and religious subjects, acknowledging frankly that there are many perplexities, difficulties, and obscurities, and that any man, who thought at all—more especially a young man—must feel these sensibly ; that Locke and Paley, and the ordinary routine of instructors, could not resolve these ; on the contrary, their much vaunted volumes only augmented and increased them ; for entire satisfaction and full solution it was quite indispensable to apply to other and different, to more profound and higher authorities.

After a very long conversation and much discussion, and many learned doubts, the weather having cleared up, Shelley quitted the dialectician, being invited to call again, to come and renew their discourse, and to improve their acquaintance. This he did several times, and paid many visits to Wadham, if indeed that college was the scene of the friendly disputations. He generally gave me an account of what was said, expressing always in warm terms his sense of the candour, intelligence, learning, and liberality of his new friend. If he ever told me the name, I have forgotten it ; as also whether he was a tutor, one of the fellows, or only an inmate of the college ; whether he was a layman or a clergyman. I have often thought that if his good star had led him to a college where he would have been treated frankly, kindly, and handsomely, the result of his academical residence would have been altogether different and more beneficial ; however, it was pre-ordained, and no doubt for the wisest purposes, that his lofty, daring spirit should undergo the baptism, not of water, but of fire.

A student was seldom expelled from either of the Universities, rarely indeed from Oxford, for any serious and discreditable cause. It commonly occurred because the pompous folly and preposterous self-importance of some vulgar upstart—some Jack-in-office, some beggar on horseback, some servitor or chapel-clerk, who had been most improperly lifted up and exalted into a little brief, local authority, had been wounded in his silly pride by what he was pleased to consider insubordination and a breach of discipline. Consequently, there was little disgrace in the infliction, and the mark of paltry, petty, pitiful vengeance was universally and utterly despised. Although this is certainly the case, and the stigma is disregarded, the outrage against my incomparable friend was not

the less abominable. The opprobrium under which the University fell on that account is not the less crying and flagrant.

Many zealous and ardent worshippers of genius maintain that the execrable crime demands solemn and public expiation, by conspicuous atonement, by some striking and lasting tribute to the memory of the highly gifted and insulted party. They contend that inasmuch as the duration of a body corporate is eternal, and through perpetual succession the individuality and personality are unchanged, the present authorities of the University are not less amenable or liable to disgrace, censure, and punishment, to condign punishment, than were those wretched men whose hands actually struck the base and cowardly blow. In strict justice, therefore, they urge that, unless honourable amends be forthwith made, the Vice-Chancellor and Proctors of the University, and the Master of University College ought to be scourged, openly and severely, throughout the whole length of High Street.

The same strictness of the highest justice also peremptorily demands, as they, nothing doubting, do assert, that bare-headed and barefooted, with no other garment than their shirts, and with halters round their necks, having received the prescribed number of stripes, they should ask pardon humbly on their knees, of God, and of His holy angels, for the tyranny and insolence of those whom they at present represent, towards an angelic spirit; in order that, being thus admonished, they may learn justice, and not again to condemn god-like men, the heroes of the earth, and its salt.

I repeat modestly what I have often heard from the lips of hero-worshippers; neither then nor now presuming to affirm, or to deny, the correctness of their conclusions, because I am myself, in some slight degree, interested and implicated in the matters in question; and that a man should be judge in his own cause is never expedient.

CHAPTER X

I HAD been invited to spend the Easter Vacation at Field Place. I have been reminded very lately of a trifling circumstance, which I had entirely forgotten, but of which I instantly became reminiscent. In accepting the invitation three or

four months before the time to which it related, I had expressed a doubt whether it was prudent to look so far into the future : this pretended scruple caused much amusement in the family, and seemed extremely grotesque and ludicrous ; so much so that it was always borne in mind. Events proved painfully that my doubt was but too well founded, although I felt no reason at the time for doubting ; and without intending to prophesy, I was a true prophet.

It is possible that the Muses may not be less prone to tittle-tattle than other mature virgins, for there is gossip even in an University. I found amongst my father's papers a gossiping letter, 'a foolish performance' enough ; but, as it is a contemporary narrative of 'the late occurrence at University College', I will extract a portion of it ; it is partly true, and partly false, as such narratives usually are.

There was no desire to be singular, or even to be dual, for two singulars would make a dual. The two young men associated chiefly with each other, but they kept company with others also ; but little, in truth, with men of their own college, because their society was not congenial. They often took long walks together into the country, a recreation which was highly approved of ; the lectures and other duties detained them until one or two, the public dinner was at four ; there was no obligation to dine in hall, and it is obvious that it was impossible to walk for five or six hours without giving up the college dinner. Shelley was always dressed like a gentleman, handsomely indeed ; but there was something of singularity in his appearance, it must be admitted. His throat was often bare, the collar of his shirt open, in days when a huge neck-cloth was the mode ; other men's heads, like those of private soldiers, were then clipped quite close, the poet's locks were long, which certainly was a singular phenomenon, and streaming like a meteor ; and the air of his little round hat upon his little round head was troubled and peculiar.

'We are charged with seeming to say, 'We are superior to everybody !' I acknowledge the truth of the charge, I accept the challenge ; and I now say boldly, confidently, and without fear of contradiction, of my incomparable friend, 'He was superior to everybody !'

I found also a letter, of which I knew nothing, and which I had never seen before, from Shelley to my father, amongst his papers, after the death of my father and of Shelley. It has no date, but was written in the trellised room, with the kindest

and most honourable feelings, and plainly under strong emotion, being confused and inaccurate, a thing unusual, and almost unprecedented with my true yoke-fellow.

I do not believe, that Mr. T. Shelley ever let fall the expressions which were imputed to him. It is my duty to speak the truth, the whole truth, and therefore I cannot but confess that the poor fellow had many underhand ways ; these I found out, sometimes long subsequent to the event. I discovered them casually after an absence from him, and more particularly after his last long sad absence ; but the obligation to tell the whole truth requires, that I should add, that his underhand ways differed in one very important respect from those of other people. The latter were concealed, because they were mean, selfish, sordid, too bad, in one word to be told ; his secrets, on the contrary, were hidden through modesty, delicacy, generosity, refinement of soul, through a dislike to be praised and thanked for noble, disinterested, high-minded deeds, for incredible liberality and self-sacrifice.

I did not know of the existence of his letter to my father until I found it, when he was no more, after the hand that wrote it had been rapidly reduced to ashes in a funeral fire, kindled on the coast of Italy in obedience to the strict laws and regulations of quarantine.

Of these tragic scenes I must discourse at length hereafter, painful as the task will be ; for the present it suffices to say that, like every other memorial of the Divine Poet which I possess, and in due season will freely produce, it reminded me forcibly, yet needlessly, of the greatness of my loss. What answer was returned to the letter does not appear, and can never appear ; without doubt, a courteous and a becoming one

6th April, 1811.

B. J. came to me this morning from Oxford. I have had the whole history from him ; and the reason of all this strange conduct in your son and Shelley is what I supposed, a desire to be singular. There is no striking impiety in the pamphlet ; but it goes to show, that, because a supreme power cannot be seen, such power may be doubted to exist. It is a foolish performance, so far as argument goes ; but written in good language. These two young men gave up associating with any body else some months since ; never dined in College ; dressed differently from all others, and did everything in their power to show singularity, as much as to say, ' We are superior

to everybody'. They have been writing Novels. Shelley has published his, and your son has not. Shelley is son to the Member for Shoreham. He has always been odd, I find, and suspected of insanity, but of great acquirements; so is your son; I mean, as to the latter, he is of high repute in College.

C. R.

To J. H. Norton.

15, POLAND STREET.

SIR,

I accompanied (at his desire) Mr. Jefferson Hogg to Mr. C., who was intrusted with certain propositions to be offered to my friend. I was there extremely surprised; no less hurt than surprised, to find, my father in his interview with Mr. C. had, either unadvisedly or intentionally, let fall expressions, which conveyed an idea, that Mr. J. H. was the 'original corruptor' of my principles. That on this subject (notwithstanding his long experience) Mr. T. Shelley must know less than his son, will be conceded; and I feel it but justice, in consequence of your feelings, so natural, what Mr. C. communicated, positively to deny the assertion; I feel this tribute, which I have paid to the just sense of horror you entertain, to be due to you, as a gentleman. I hope, my motives stand excused to your candour.

Myself and my friend have offered concessions; painful, indeed, they are to myself, but such as on mature consideration we find due to our high sense of filial duty.

Permit me to request your indulgence for the liberty I have taken in thus addressing you.

I remain your obedient humble servant,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To John Hogg, Esq.

February, 1857.

DEAR H.

You know he was fond of chemistry, and in one of his experiments he set fire to the butler, Laker, and then soused him with a pail of cold water. On another occasion, in the spring of 1811, he went with C. to the British Forum, in the vicinity of Covent Garden. It was then a spouting club, in which Gale Jones and other Radicals abused all existing governments. Bysshe made so good a speech, complimenting and differing from the previous orators, that when he left the

room, there was a rush to find out who he was, and to induce him to attend there again. He gave them a false name and address, not caring a farthing about the meeting, or the subjects there discussed. C. may know some anecdotes about him ; he was more with him than I was, as at that time I was engaged in professional pursuits.

I am sorry for the loss of all Bysshe's letters, which, with others, were destroyed when I left London for Edinburgh. I never saw him after his second marriage.

I remain your affectionate cousin,

J. G.

To H. S.

DEAR J.

This chemical anecdote may, I think, be placed with my recollections on the same subject. I forget whether I mentioned the dreadful state he was in by careless manipulation of combustibles ; his hands and face being burned and blackened by some badly managed experiment, either at Eton or Oxford. He had caustic to play with, I fancy, for our white frocks used, in a mysterious manner, to be found stained with black marks, pronounced by the learned lunar caustic ; and we poor little ignoramuses were accused of knowing how it came there ; and I can feel now my stupid, childish silence, and wonder at the irremovable stain. Now I can imagine, our frequent visits to the Hall Chamber, Bysshe's room, were the certain means of getting marked.

H. S.

We had lived together in London nearly a month, and notwithstanding occasional interruptions by disturbing forces, on the whole very happily ; we were now to part, but only, it was believed, for a short time : in less than a month our pleasant student life was to recommence at York, and to be continued there as agreeably as ever, without let or hindrance, for a year. At the expiration of the year it was to be calmly enjoyed in London for an indefinite period, during the remainder of our lives. So was it that man proposed—of the actual disposition, hereafter.

I quitted Shelley with mutual regret, leaving him alone in the trellised chamber, where he was to remain, a bright-eyed, restless fox amidst sour grapes, not, as his poetic imagination

at first suggested, for ever, but a little while longer. I left London at nine o'clock in the evening by the Holyhead mail, having dined with the grave companion of my journey at a coffee-house in Bond Street. In the morning we found ourselves at Birmingham, and breakfasted at the *Hen and Chickens*, which at that time was one of the worst and dirtiest of the many bad and dirty inns which made the recollections of former days too often bitter. The third person at breakfast was an outside passenger, an Irishman, who informed us, that on a former occasion, when he was at Birmingham, he happened to be short of money, the rents of his estates not having been duly remitted to him, so that he was obliged to raise a sum on his watch, a gold watch, which he produced. My cautious companion began to look rather alarmed at this opening, as if he feared our new friend from the outside was about to require of him a loan on the security of the gold watch. He answered him shortly, but the narration was not to be broken off so easily: 'Accordingly, I asked the waiter at this hotel to recommend a respectable pawnbroker to me; he did so. I went to his shop, and was treated very handsomely; he at once advanced on the watch, without any difficulty, more than I had expected; and, indeed, I found him to be a liberal, intelligent, and high-minded man, and a most perfect gentleman. I have recommended him to many of my friends, and as you, sir, may probably have occasion to raise money in that way, I will point out his shop to you before you quit Birmingham, if you will give me leave'. My companion, a prudent, precise, scrupulous, exact, and thriving man, shrank back at the proposal. He felt that it was just as probable that he should murder the landlord, rob the inn, and then set fire to the filthy *Hen and Chickens*, as that he should ever be under the necessity of pledging his watch.

'No! no! sir, I thank you, it is unnecessary; that is quite out of my way; pray, do not trouble yourself!'

'It is no trouble at all; you can see the shop from the door of the inn. You may not want money yourself, but some of your friends very likely will.'

The more the Irishman pressed, the more my companion held back: the former seemed quite uneasy that his obliging offer was declined; so to soothe his wounded feelings, I interposed: 'If the place can be seen from the door of the inn, you may show it me; that will do as well'. I went to the door with him, and he pointed out a pawnbroker's shop, and begged

me to remember the situation and the name : I promised to remember them.

We had remained in Birmingham already longer than it is usual for a mail coach to remain, and we suddenly resumed our seats at the sound of the horn. My companion, as I fancied, seemed unhappy, when I went out of the room with the Irishman. To relieve his mind, I said, 'As the man was getting so uneasy, to comfort him I just allowed him to show me the shop.'

'Yes, it was very good-natured of you ! That was characteristic ; was it not ? altogether Irish ! For my part, I never like to trust myself alone with an Irishman ; I am always afraid lest the fellow should take it into his head to cut my throat !'

When we were changing horses, the son of Erin came to the window, 'Do you recollect the shop and the name ? Are you sure ? I can give you the address !'

'Thank you ; I recollect them !'

He disappeared, we saw no more of him, and my cautious companion seemed to be relieved.

We left the mail, or rather the mail left us behind at Shrewsbury. We ordered a post-chaise and chops, and went forth to take a look at the picturesque old town, and the beautiful river Severn, which were new to me, and then returned to our inn. We dined in the same room with a venerable old clergyman, and a pretty young female who had a baby in her arms. They were taking tea.

'Wife, or daughter ?' We mooted the question, as we were jolted along to Ellesmere. I opined that she was his wife.

'No', said my companion indignantly, although an old man himself. 'That is impossible ; that old fellow can never have such a pretty young wife !'

'Not impossible, by any means ; only he is a very fortunate old fellow, if he really has so young—so charming a wife !'

The discussion became animated, my companion let down the front window, and asked the post-boy who they were. A post-boy knows nothing beyond his horses' heads ; he could not tell us.

'The next time I go to Shrewsbury, I will ask the landlady : she will inform me.'

I never heard what the decision was, and therefore it is not improbable that it was in my favour ; that she was his wife.

Oh ! happy divine ! A divine for a husband, and a divine wife !

The Wrekin was pointed out to me, and some other remarkable objects by the way ; and after a rough ride we arrived at Ellesmere. It is a sweet spot, in a pleasant country, seated on the margin of a pretty mere, or lake, of clear water. We had a most delightful supper ; it was called a Welsh rabbit, and was said to be the true genuine and native form of that engaging little creature. There was bright, pale amber ale, sweetened with loaf sugar, and flavoured with nutmeg, in a large silver bowl ; slices of toasted bread floated in this nectar. Some excellent toasted cheese was brought in, smoking, hissing hot. A slice of toast was transferred from the bowl to the plate, and the melted cheese was spread upon it ; the golden liquor was ladled out into glasses. Thus we supped, not only on the first evening, but on every other during my stay at Ellesmere. I never fed on nectar and ambrosia before, and I regret to add that I have never partaken of the banquets of the immortal gods since. No substance, solid or fluid, differs so much in quality as the ale or beer in various parts of England. In the northern counties it is peculiarly detestable. If it were clear, which it never is there, it would be a liquor as generous as the water that drains from a peat-bog. It must be a guilty land indeed, which the angry gods have visited with the tremendous visitation of bad beer ! I found at Ellesmere a young college friend ; he was visiting, during the Easter vacation, in the same bachelor's house as myself ; we walked, or rode on horseback, all the morning, about this singularly pleasant land, and after dinner we rowed a handsome barge, with some assistance, round the pretty mere, and across its still, pellucid waters ; our exploits in this line were long remembered ; the tradition of them came to my ears many years after. We visited several of the neighbouring squires, and partook of their free hospitality, tasting that fine old port wine, which is not the least striking of the many romantic beauties of North Wales. Their society was not the less agreeable and amusing, because it was somewhat peculiar and characteristic ; the conversation, for example, would often become eminently Celtic after dinner, particularly when the excellent port began to operate, and the warm Cambrian blood had grown still warmer. They then talked of their quarrels ; of horsewhipping and knocking down ; of breaking the neck, beating out the brains, and cutting out

a rascal's liver. The weather was charming. I was always in the open air ; for reading there was little leisure : the tales of La Fontaine, two or three of the minor works of Xenophon, as his discourse on Hunting ; and a cursory survey of a newspaper, comprehended my course of study in the county of Salop. We made several agreeable excursions. Of these, the chief was our expedition to Llangollen. I first entered the Principality in a post-chaise ; we came upon the wonderful bridge of junction, Pont Cysylte, and we walked across it, along the towing-path of the canal, of which the bridge is the aqueduct, and then into the tunnel at the farther end, by the same path. On our return, we descended to the lovely river Dee, which the lofty bridge so proudly bestrides. On the banks of the river, a great crowd of country people was assembled to witness the rites of a congregation of Anabaptists. We joined them just in time to see an old man in a loose flannel gown seize an old woman, dressed in the same manner, by the arm, and wade with her into the middle of the stream, which reached up to their waists. She then gave him her hands, and throwing herself backwards, baptism by total immersion was achieved by the old minister, precisely as bathing in the sea is effected by old bathing women. Some prayers, doubtless, were repeated, but we could not hear them. Whilst the dripping pair came slowly out of the river, the bystanders sang hymns in Welsh, and their loud cry filled the valley. We ordered dinner at Llangollen, and walked to Valle Crucis, a sweet religious seclusion, and to some other very striking points of view. Our exercise during the morning, and the glad sound of the Welsh harp during dinner, made a poor meal less unpalatable. After dinner, we visited the residence of the two lady-friends, Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby, whose strong mutual attachment was esteemed still more remarkable and romantic than their abode.

The church was open, and we entered it. We had assisted at the ceremony of adult baptism before ; we now were witnesses of infant baptism. The tones of the Welsh language were solemn and sonorous, and the water—by means of which the young soldier of Christ was to be initiated—was not the noble stream of Dee, but only so much of the saving fluid as a broken pie-dish, standing in the font, could contain. The broken pie-dish amused us greatly, not because it was a vessel of dishonour, ill-suited for a staid occasion, but as being a symbol.

Our kind host was familiar with Wales, with its usages—warlike and convivial: he said to us, when our chaise entered the Principality in the morning, ‘Now, keep a sharp look-out, young gentlemen, and see if you can find a whole man. I never could!’

He informed us that whenever a Welshman goes to market, to a fair, or indeed from home, on any mission, he has a drink, and, if possible, a fight also. If the latter cannot be had, he remains drinking until he is quite drunk and it is quite dark, and then, returning homewards, by steep, rugged, and devious paths, he falls down—up, over, or into some perilous place, and so sustains as much damage as he could have found in battle. We looked out, as we were directed, both in going and in returning: one man had his arm in a sling, another walked with a crutch; on this eye there was a patch; that head was bound up; something or other had been mended, and was still out of repair,—in every male on the road. The women were quite sound, in their blue cloth jackets and round black felt hats—they seemed brisk and entire; but their mates were all fractured, more or less. The broken pie-dish in the font, therefore, was an emblem, a type, a pledge, that the young Christian would always fight manfully, although not always perhaps under those banners to which his fidelity had been promised.

The Welsh rabbit, our usual supper, was still dearer to us than ever, after the greasy, blackened chops and tough steaks of Llangollen.

Whilst I, like a mere matter-of-fact man, was taking the world easily, and prosaically enjoying life as it came, my poor absent friend, as his letters too plainly testify, was paying the penalty of his poetic temperament, and suffering severely from the cruel aches and pains of imagination.

POLAND STREET, *April 18, 1811.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Certainly this place is a little solitary, but as a person cannot be quite alone when he has even got himself with him, I get on pretty well. I have employed myself in writing poetry, and as I go to bed at eight o'clock, time passes quicker than it otherwise might.

Yesterday I had a letter from Whitton to invite me to his house; of course, the answer was negative. I wrote to say, that I would resign all claim to the entail, if he would allow me

two hundred pounds a year, and divide the rest among my sisters. Of course he will not refuse the offer. You remarked that, in Lord Mount Edgecombe's hermitage, I should have nothing to talk of but myself; nor have I anything here, except I should transcribe the *jeux-d'esprit* of the maid.

Mr. Pilfold has written a very civil letter; my mother intercepted that—sent to my father, and wrote to me to come, inclosing the money. I, of course, returned it.

Miss Westbrook has this moment called on me, with her sister. It certainly was very kind of her. Adieu!

The post goes.

Yours,

P. B. S.

To T. J. H., Ellesmere.

LONDON, April 24, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You have, with wonderful sagacity, no doubt, refuted an argument of mine, the very existence of which I had forgotten. Something singularly conceited, no doubt, by the remarks you make on it. Fine flowery language, you say; well, I cannot help it; you see me in my weakest moments. All I can tell you of it is, that I certainly was not laughing, as you conjecture. This circumstance may go against me. I do not know that it will, however, as I have by no means a *precise* idea of what the subject of this composition was.

'The Galilean is not a favourite of mine', a French author writes. The French write audaciously—rashly. 'So far from owing him any thanks for his favours, I cannot avoid confessing that I owe a secret grudge to his carpentership—*charpenterie*. The reflecting part of the community—that part in whose happiness we philosophers have so strong an interest—certainly do not require his morality, which, where there is no *vice*, fetters *vertue*. Here we all agree. Let this horrid Galilean rule the *Canaille* then! I give them up'. And I give them up; I will no more mix politics and virtue, they are incompatible.

My little friend Harriet W. is gone to her prison-house. She is quite well in health; at least so she says, though she looks very much otherwise. I saw her yesterday. I went with her sister to Miss H.'s, and walked about Clapham Common with them for two hours. The youngest is a most amiable girl; the eldest is really conceited, but very condescending. I took

the sacrament with her on Sunday. You say I talk philosophically of her kindness in calling on me. She is very charitable and good. I shall always think of it with gratitude, because I certainly did not deserve it, and she exposed herself to much possible odium. It is perhaps scarcely doing her a kindness—it is perhaps inducing positive unhappiness—to point out to her a road which leads to perfection, the attainment of which, perhaps, does not repay the difficulties of the progress. What do you think of this? If trains of thought, development of mental energies influence in any degree a future state; if this is *even* possible—if it stands on *at all* securer ground than mere hypothesis; then is it not a service? Where am I gotten? perhaps into another ridiculous argument. I will not proceed, for I shall forget all I have said, and cannot, in justice, animadvert upon any of your critiques.

I called on John Grove this morning. I met my father in the passage, and politely inquired after his health. He looked as black as a thunder-cloud, and said, 'Your most humble servant!' I made him a low bow, and wishing him a very good morning—passed on. He is very irate about my proposals. I cannot resign anything till I am twenty-one. I cannot do anything, therefore I have three more years to consider of the matter you mentioned. I shall go down to Field Place soon. I wait for Mr. Pilfold's arrival, with whom I shall depart. He is resolved (the old fellow) that I shall not stay at Field Place. If I please—as I shall do for some time—I *will*. This resolution of mine was hinted to him: 'Oh! then I shall take his sister away before he comes'. But I shall follow her, as her retirement cannot be a secret. This will probably lead me to wander about for some time. You will hear from me, however, wherever I am. If all these things are useless, you will see me at York, or at Ellesmere, if you still remain there. The scenery excites mournful ideas. I am sorry to hear it; I hoped that it would have had a contrary effect. May I indulge the idea that York is as stupid as Oxford. And yet you did not wander alone amid the mountains? I think I shall live at the foot of Snowdon. Suppose we both go there directly? Do not be surprised if you see me at Ellesmere. Yes, you would, for it would be a strange thing. I am now nearly recovered. Strange that Florian could not see the conclusions from his own reasoning. How can the hope of a higher reward stimulating an action make it virtuous, if the essence of virtue is disinterested, as all, who

know anything of virtue, must allow, as *he* does allow. How inconsistent is this religion ! How apt to pervert the judgement, and finally the heart of the most amiably-intentioned who confide in it ! I wish I was with you in the mountains ; could not we live there ?

Direct to 15, Poland Street. I write to-morrow to York.

Your affectionate Friend,

P. B. S.

Your B—— is worse than stupid ; he is provoking. Have you really no one to associate with—not even a peasant, a child of nature, a spider ? And this from the hermit, the philosopher ? Oh, you are right to laugh at me. I finished the little poem, one stanza of which you said was pretty ; it is, on the whole, a most stupid thing, as you will confess, when I some day inflict a perusal of it on your innocent ears. Yet I have nothing to amuse myself with, and if it does not injure others and you cannot avoid it, I do not see much harm in being mad.

You even vindicate it in some almost inspired stanzas, which I found among my transcriptions to-day.

Adieu ! I am going to Miss W.'s to dinner. Her father is out. I will write to-morrow.

To T. J. H., Ellesmere.

LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS, *April 28, 1811.*

I AM now at Grove's. I don't know where I am, where I will be. Future, present, past, is all a mist ; it seems as if I had begun existence anew, under auspices so unfavourable. Yet no ! That is stupid ! My poor little friend has been ill, her sister sent for me the other night. I found her on a couch pale ; her father is civil to me, very strangely ; the sister is too civil by half. She began talking about *l'Amour*. I philosophized, and the youngest said, she had such a headache, that she could not bear conversation. Her sister then went away, and I stayed till half-past twelve. Her father had a large party below, he invited me ; I refused. Yes ! The fiend, the wretch, shall fall ! Harriet will do for one of the crushers, and the eldest (Emily), with some taming, will do, too. They are both very clever, and the youngest (my friend) is amiable. Yesterday she was better, to-day her father compelled her to go to Clapham, whither I have conducted her, and I am now returned. Why is it, that the moment we two are separ-

ated, I can scarcely set bounds to my hatred of intolerance ; is it feeling ? is it passion ? I would willingly persuade myself that it is neither ; willingly would I persuade myself that all that is amiable, all that is good, falls by its prevalence, and that I ought unceasingly to attempt its destruction. Yet, you say that millions of bad are necessary for the existence of a few pre-eminent in excellence. Is not this a despotism of virtue, which is inconsistent with its nature ? Is it not the Asiatic tyrant, who renders his territory wretched to fill his seraglio ? the shark, who must glut his maw with millions of fish, in order that he may exist ? I have often said, that I doubted your divinities, and if this inference follows the established hypothesis of their existence, I do not merely doubt, but hope that my doubts are founded on truth.

I think, then, that the *term* 'superior' is bad, as it involves this horrible consequence. Let the word 'perfect', then, be offered as a substitute ; to which each who aspires, may indulge a hope of arriving ; or rather every one (speaking of *men*) may hope to contribute to woman's arrival, which, in fact, is themselves advancing ; although, like the shadow preceding the figure, or the spiral, it always may advance, and never touch.

My sister does not come to town, nor will she ever, at least I can see no chance of it. I will not deceive myself ; she is lost, lost to everything ; Intolerance has tainted her—she talks cant and twaddle. I would not venture thus to prophesy without being most perfectly convinced in my own mind of the truth of what I say. It *may* not be irretrievable ; but, yes, it is ! A young female, who only once, only for a short time, asserted her claim to an unfettered use of reason, bred up with bigots, having before her eyes examples of the consequences of scepticism, or even of philosophy, which she must now see to lead directly to the former. A mother, who is mild and tolerant, yet narrow-minded ; how, I ask, is *she* to be rescued from its influence ?

I tell you, my dear friend, openly, the feelings of my mind, the state of its convictions on every subject ; this, then, is one, and I do not expect that you will say, 'It must be so painful to your feelings, that I hope you will never again mention it'. I do not expect you to say, 'I had rather you were under a pleasing error ; it is not a friendly act to dissipate the mists, which hide a frightful prospect'. On other subjects you have soared above prejudices, you have investigated them, terrible

as they may have appeared, and resolved to abide by the result of that investigation. And you *have* abided by it. Why then should there yet remain a subject on which you profess yourself fearful to inquire? I will not allow you to say incompetent. Error cannot in any of its shapes be good, I cannot conceive the possibility.

You talk of the credulity of mankind, its proneness to superstition, that it ever has been a slave to the vilest of errors. Is your inference necessary, or direct, that it ever will continue so? You say that 'I have no idea how society could be freed from false notions on almost every subject'. No; nor would the first man in the world, supposing that there ever was one, at the moment of his arriving to his estate, have any conception how a fertile piece of land would look without weeds; he stares at it, and thinks it is least of all fitted for his conveniences, when a stricter searching into its nature would convince him that it was calculated to contribute to them with a sufficient proportion of labour, more than the barer land, which appeared clear.

Dares the lama, most fleet of the sons of the wind,
The lion to rouse from his skull-covered lair?
When the tiger approaches can the fast-fleeting hind
Repose trust in his footsteps of air?
No! Abandon'd he sinks in a trance of despair,
The monster transfixes his prey,
On the sand flows his life-blood away;
Whilst India's rocks to his death-yells reply,
Protracting the horrible harmony.

Yet the fowl of the desert, when danger encroaches,
Dares fearless to perish defending her brood,
Though the fiercest of cloud-piercing tyrants approaches,
Thirsting—aye, thirsting for blood;
And demands, like mankind, his brother for food;
Yet more lenient, more gentle than they;
For hunger, not glory, the prey
Must perish. Revenge does not howl in the dead,
Nor ambition with fame crown the murderer's head.

Though weak, as the lama, that bounds on the mountains,
And endued not with fast-fleeting footsteps of air,
Yet, yet will I draw from the purest of fountains,
Though a fiercer than tiger is there.
Though more dreadful than death, it scatters despair,
Though its shadow eclipses the day,
And the darkness of deepest dismay
Spreads the influence of soul-chilling terror around,
And lowers on the corpses, that rot on the ground.

They came to the fountain to draw from its stream,
 Waves too pure, too celestial, for mortals to see ;
 They bathed for a while in its silvery beam,
 Then perish'd, and perish'd like me.
 For in vain from the grasp of the Bigot I flee ;
 The most tenderly loved of my soul
 Are slaves to his hated control.
 He pursues me, he blasts me ! 'Tis in vain that I fly :
 What remains, but to curse him,—to curse him and die ?

There it is—a mad effusion of this morning ! I had resolved not to mortgage before you left London ; I told you, that I should divide it with my sisters, and leave everything else to fate.

Your affectionate friend,

P. B. S.

To T. J. H., Ellesmere.

CHAPTER XI

THE pleasant passages in this life come to an end, as well as its painful incidents, with this difference, however, that the former always seem to terminate more speedily. My young college friend had returned to Oxford, my older and original companion and myself were to travel together to York. We reached Chester, if I remember rightly, in a post-chaise. Some twenty years later I had occasion to become very familiar with that venerable city, and, from the peculiar circumstances of my position, with its decayed and dilapidated, but ancient and remarkable institutions also ; but this was my first visit to the renowned Roman camp and city of West Chester. I was surprised by its Rows, its gates, and walls, delighted with its beautiful site and noble river ; and the walk round its walls, which I have enjoyed many times since before breakfast—has left a recollection so charming that I would gladly lay down my pen, and go forth, and make the pleasant circuit at once, and once more.

The journey from one Roman city to the other—from Chester to York—was tedious and abominable ; a slow, heavy, uneasy coach, rough roads, steep interminable hills, and filthy inns, and barbarous and disgusting fellow-travellers. The inhabitants of the borders of Yorkshire and Lancashire entertain

mutually an intense dislike for each other, and in this dislike, certainly, both parties are fully justified. •

The Yorkshireman has a profound contempt for the understanding of the Lancastrian, he accounts him a simpleton—a poor fool, and calls him such. The Lancashireman views his neighbour precisely in the same light, and treats him in the same manner. Whilst each utterly despises the other, each has a most exaggerated opinion of his own acuteness, and this he is perpetually endeavouring to demonstrate by overreaching him in a bargain. As soon as the rivals meet, one of them instantly proposes an exchange—a swap, is their phrase—to barter watches, knives, handkerchiefs, hats; article against article of the same or of a different description, of equal value, or with a balance to be adjusted by money. This traffic was kept up whilst we were on the frontiers, and indeed during the greater part of our journey. It was carried on invariably in a loud, angry voice, in an uncouth dialect, with contemptuous menacing gestures, and sometimes an inside passenger bawling out through the window, or standing up with his head thrust out, would haggle in rude clamorous wrath with some brother Vandal on the top of the coach, touching an exchange of waistcoat.

I had never assisted at a swap before, or fallen in with these borderers; the trafficking savages seemed to be the most odious of mankind. I have since learned that the savage is still more offensive when he is half-civilized, when he has grown into a Manchesterman, a cotton lord; and more especially when he is unhappily in a position to swap, as a mischievous minister, on an extensive scale, basely and perniciously.

To see Leeds again, it is said, is to like it less than before. I had already seen that town more than once, and I have seen it since so often, that I can revisit it now without any increased aversion. We passed a night very uncomfortably, of course, at Leeds, and the next morning—I believe it was Sunday—a two-horse coach took us to York—to York, with which city I was then tolerably well acquainted, and with which I have since had so many opportunities to become perfectly familiar: and here the race-horse was at once put into the dung-cart. I was introduced the same day to the conveyancer, at whose chambers my professional studies were to commence. He was a worthy, good-natured, friendly man—a right good fellow, indeed; a provincial barrister with a fair share of business;

and sufficiently well acquainted with the routine of practice. This was all ; the learned gentleman had as much of human learning as his horse,—just as much erudition as his saddle, and his attainments were graced by a Yorkshire dialect so excessively broad, that if Oxberry had spoken so broadly on the stage, he would have been censured for gross exaggeration ; no Yorkshire tike, it would have been affirmed, ever spoke such a lingo. Some feeble—very feeble—and impotent attempts have been lately made to remedy and correct the ignorance and vulgarity by which a liberal profession is oppressed and weighed down, or rather the pretence and affectation of reform are kept up ; a false pretence to supply a genuine article, but in reality to substitute and palm upon the public, a counterfeit—a base counterfeit, and as such pledged to uphold the vested and sacred interests of imposture. But of these matters hereafter.

York was the residence of many genteel families of competent fortunes, and much hospitality was exercised there. It was hardly possible to dine out without meeting the great diner-out of the district, and without observing his more than clerical enjoyment of a good dinner ; for if he was less than a parson in some respects, he was more than one in a very essential particular, the love of eating and drinking. His hearty, cordial, genial laugh was of itself exhilarating, and his incessant joking of jokes passed off very well in a provincial city ; in society of a higher description it was often in the way, and one soon grew weary of the noisy, impudent, shallow, clerical jester, Sidney Smith. Alone engrossing the whole of the conversation, he must have all the talk to himself, speaking always of little else than himself. He shot out cart-loads of rubbish with an overpowering din, sometimes producing a good thing, no doubt, which a man of moderate parts can hardly fail to do, who boldly brings out whatever comes uppermost, with very little regard for his own dignity, and none for the feelings of others. There was, moreover, something cowardly in his facetiousness, his buffoonery ; he ran the rig mercilessly upon the weak and helpless, carefully avoiding all contact with every person who might prove to be his match, or more than his match.

I walked one Sunday morning to a village a few miles from York, of which he had the living, to hear him preach, soon after I came to reside there, and before I had seen him ; for he was already a person of some notoriety ; he had been a

popular preacher in London, and he had taken part in the controversy between the University of Oxford and the *Edinburgh Review*. The church was mean and small, and small was the congregation; it was composed of a few farmers, their families and servants, and labourers in husbandry. His voice would have filled a cathedral, his appearance was adapted to be seen from a distance; there was nothing remarkable or valuable in his discourse. I cannot believe that he could have written a good sermon; the matter was not in him. He might have borrowed the composition of some eminent divine, it is true, and his delivery would have been distinct and agreeable, but not effective. He could never have appeared sufficiently in earnest; he wanted that deep, moving, Christian earnestness which is indispensable for edification. There was a certain pulpit display, which his hearers admired and praised, but nothing more.

I met Sidney Smith afterwards at intervals, for evidently disliking his own cloth, he affected the society of lawyers. I compared him in my own mind with old Sam Parr. They both toiled unceasingly, and laboured hard and very successfully to demonstrate to all the world how utterly unfit they were to be what each of them so vehemently strove to be, a bishop. The one rendered learning, the other wit, contemptible and ridiculous.

15, POLAND STREET, *April 26, 1811.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I indulge despair. *Why* do I so? I will not philosophize; it is, perhaps, a poor way of administering comfort to myself to say that I *ought* not to be in need of it. I fear the despair which springs from disappointed love, is a passion—a passion, too, which is least of all reducible to reason. But it is a passion, it is independent of volition; it is the necessary effect of a cause, which *must*, I feel, continue to operate. Wherefore, then, do you ask, *Why* I indulge despair? And what shall I tell you, which can make you happier, which can alleviate even solitude and regret. Shall I tell you the truth? Oh, you are too well aware of that, or you would not talk of despair. Shall I say that the time may come when happiness shall down upon a night of wretchedness? Why should I be a false prophet, if I said this? I do not know, except on the general principle that the evils in this world powerfully overbalance its pleasures; how, then, could I be

justified in saying this ? You will tell me to cease to think, to cease to feel ; you will tell me to be anything but what I am ; and I fear I must obey the command before I can talk of hope.

I find there can be bigots in philosophy as well as in religion ; I, perhaps, may be classed with the former. I *have* read your letter attentively. Yet *all* religionists *do* judge of philosophers in the way which you reprehend ; *faith* is one of the highest moral virtues—the foundation, indeed, upon which all others must rest ; and religionists think, that he who has neglected to *cultivate* this, has not performed *one-third* of the moral duties, as Bishop Warburton dogmatically asserts. The religionists, then, by this very *Faith*, without which they could not be religionists, think the most virtuous philosopher must have neglected one-third of the moral duties.

If, then, a religionist, the *most* amiable of them, regards the best philosopher as *far* from being virtuous, has not a philosopher reason to suspect the amiability of a system which inculcates so glaringly uncharitable opinions ? Can a being, amiable to a high degree, possessed, of course, of judgment, without which amiability would be in a poor way, hold such opinions as these ? Supposing even, they were supported by reason, they ought to be suspected as leading to a conclusion *ad absurdum* ; since, however, they combine irrationality and absurdity with effects on the mind most opposite to retiring amiability, are they not to be *more* than suspected ? Take any system of religion, lop off all the disgusting excrescences, or rather adjuncts, retain virtuous precepts, qualify selfish dogmas (I would even allow as much irrationality as amiability could swallow, but uncombined with immorality and self-conceitedness) ; do all this, and I will say, it is a system which *can* do no harm, and, indeed, is highly requisite for the vulgar. But perhaps it is best for the latter that they should have it as their fathers gave it them ; that the amiable, the inquiring should reject it altogether.

Yet I will allow that it *may* be consistent with amiability, when amiability does not know the deformity of the wretched errors, and that they *really* are as we behold them. I cannot judge of a system by the flowers which are scattered here and there ; you omit the mention of the *weeds*, which grow so high that few botanists can see the flowers ; and those who *do* gather the latter are frequently, I fear, tainted with the pestilential vapour of the former.

The argument of *supremacy* is really amiable, without that

I should give up the remotest *possibility* of success. Yet that applies but to the existence of a *Creator*, that is inconsequential: the inquirer here, the amiable inquirer, does not pause at the world, lest *she* should be left supreme; she advances *one* step higher, not being aware, or not caring to be aware, of the infinity of the staircase which she ascends. This is *irrational*, but it is not unamiable—it does not involve the hateful consequences of selfishness, self-conceitedness, and the subserviency of faith to the volition of the believer, which are necessary to the existence of 'a spurious system of theology.'

A *religionist*, I will allow, may be more amiable than a philosopher, although in one instance reason is allowed to sleep, that amiability may watch. Yet, my dear friend, this is not Intolerance, nor can that odious system stand excused on this ground, as its very principle revolts against the dear modesty which suggests a dereliction of reason in the other instance. I again assert—nor, perhaps, are you prepared to deny, much as your amiable motive might prompt you to wish it—that religion is too often the child of cold prejudice and selfish fear. Love of a Deity, of Allah, Bramah (it is all the same), certainly springs from the latter motive; is this *love*? You know too well, it is not. Here I appeal to your own heart, your own feelings. At that tribunal I feel that I am secure. I once could almost *tolerate* intolerance—it then merely injured me once; it merely deprived *me* of all that I cared for, touching myself, on earth; but now it has done more, and I cannot forgive.

Eloisa said, 'I have hated myself, that I might love thee, Abelard'. When I hear a religionist prepared to say so, as her sincere sentiments, I then will allow that in a *few* instances the virtue of religion is separable from the vice.

She is *not* lost for ever! How I hope that may be true; but I fear *I* can never ascertain, I can never influence an amelioration, as she does not any longer permit a '*philosopher*' to correspond with her. She talks of duty to her *Father*. And this is your amiable religion!

You will excuse my raving, my dear friend; you will not be severe upon my hatred of a cause which can produce such an effect as this. You talk of the dead; do we not exist after the tomb? It is a natural question, my friend, when there is nothing in life: yet it is one on which you have never told me any *solid* grounds for your opinions.

You shall hear from me again soon. I send some verses. I heard from F. yesterday. All that he said was : My letters are arrived.—G. S. F.

My dear friend, your affectionate
P. B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H., Post Office, York.

15, POLAND STREET, April 29, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Father is as fierce as a lion, again. The other day he was in town. John Grove saw him and succeeded in flattering him into a promise, that he would allow me £200 per annum, and leave me alone.

The *Misery* ; for now he has left town, and written to disannul all that he before promised. *Gelidum Nemos* is flattering like a courtier, and will, I conjecture, bring him about again. He wants me to go to Oxford to apologize to the Master, etc. No, of course !

I suppose you are now at York. I wish I could come and join you, particularly as I fear you think too much on subjects which are better for oblivion than memory.

Write something—will you make a novel?—engage in some pursuit which can interest you. I wish you would allow me to be your Dr. Willis. I would not, as I threatened in the Piazza, confine you in a dark room—no, I would advise a regimen the very opposite to that which I then recommended. You say the scenery of Wales is *too* beautiful. Yet, why not allow that to interest you ? why not cultivate the taste for poetry, which it is useless to deny that you possess ?

Indeed, I wish to come to York. I shall as soon as I can, not that I mean the strain detains me, as I am nearly well, but I want to settle pecuniary matters. I am quite well off in that now. Remember it is idle to talk of money between us, and little as it may do for politics, with us, you must allow that possession of bullion, chattels, etc., is common. Tell me, then, if you want cash, as I have nearly drained you, and all delicacy, like sisters stripping before each other, is out of the question.

Our beautiful lady tells me that 'the post is ready'. So adieu !

Your affectionate.

I will write when I hear from you. This goes to York.

To T. J. H., York.

[*Post-mark, May 2, 1811.*]

I FOUND this moment all your letters. They were in Great Portland Street. I blush when I write the direction to you. How salacious a street !

So *you* are in solitude. I wish I could be with you. I wish you could manage to come to town.

£200 per annum is really enough—more than I can want—besides, what is money to me ? What does it matter if I cannot even purchase sufficient *genteel clothes* ? I still have a shabby great-coat, and those, whose good opinion constitutes my happiness, would not regard me the better, or the worse, for this, or any other consequence of poverty. £50 per annum would be quite enough.

Why, you wish to be a Grandee ! When heaven takes your father you will probably be in possession—as his eldest son—of some £3,000 per annum, that perhaps convertible from 3 into 5 per cent. property. I should not know how to act with such a store ; but—no, I would not possess about half of it ! Yet well do I see why you would not reject it ; you think it would possibly add to the happiness of some being, to whom you cherish a remote hope of approximative union—the indissoluble, sacred union of Love :

Why is it said thou canst not live
 In a youthful breast and fair,
 Since thou eternal life canst give,
 Canst bloom for ever there ?
 Since withering pain no power possesst,
 Nor age, to blanch thy vermeil hue,
 Nor time's dread victor, death, confess'd,
 Though bathed with his poison dew,
 Still thou retain'st unchanging bloom,
 Fix'd tranquil, even in the tomb.
 And oh ! when on the blest reviving
 The day-star dawns of love,
 Each energy of soul surviving
 More vivid, soars above,
 Hast thou ne'er felt a rapturous thrill,
 Like June's warm breath, athwart thee fly,
 O'er each idea then to steal,
 When other passions die ?
 Felt it in some wild noonday dream,
 When sitting by the lonely stream,
 Where Silence says, Mine is the dell ;
 And not a murmur from the plain,
 And not an echo from the fell,
 Disputes her silent reign.

Excuse this strange momentary mania! I am now at Miss Westbrook's. She is reading Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique*. I am writing to you, but I broke off a page ago. Have you hope? Can you have hope? Then, indeed, are you fitted for an Orlando Speroso—if there is such an Italian word. I have *faint* hopes: I have some, it is true—just enough to keep body and soul together; but you—. I almost despair. I have not only to conquer all the hateful prejudices of superstition, not only to conquer duty to a father—*duty*, indeed, of all kinds—but I see in the background a monster more terrific. Have you forgotten the tremendous Gregory—the opinion of the world, its myriads of hateful champions, its ten thousands of votaries who deserved a better fate, yet compulsatorily were plunged into this—. I tremble when I think of it.

Yet marriage, Godwin says, is hateful, detestable. A kind of ineffable, sickening disgust seizes my mind when I think of this most despotic, most unrequired fetter which prejudice has forged to confine its energies. Yes! This is the fruit of superstition, and superstition must perish before this can fall! For men never speak of the author of religion as of what he really was, but as being what the world have made him. Antimatrimonialism is as necessarily connected with scepticism as if religion and marriage began their course together. How can we think well of the world? Surely these moralists suppose young men are like young puppies (as, perhaps, *generally* they are), not endowed with vision until a certain age. Adieu!

To T. J. H., York.

6, SOUTH BUILD., 8th May, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Again I write to you from S. B. I have received very few of your letters; they have been sent to Portland Street, and I cannot recover them. There is one to-day from Yoxford; are you there? You have reason—you have a right to be surprised that I am not at Field Place, that I did not instantly fly thither in spite of everything. I will explain as soon as possible. You will hear that I am there in the course of a few days.

The estate is *entirely* entailed on me,—totally out of the power of the enemy. He is yet angry beyond measure—pacification is remote; but I will be at peace, vi et armis. I

will enter his dominions, preserving a Quaker-like carelessness of opposition. I shall manage à l'Amérique, and seat myself quietly in his mansion, turning a deaf ear to any declamatory objections.

A few days ago I had a polite note from a man of letters, to whom I had been named, to invite me to breakfast. I complied, and dined with him on Sunday. He is a Deist, despising superstition, etc., etc., yet having a high veneration for the Deity, as he affirmed. And, in consequence, a long argument arose between him and some of his acquaintance; that a Deist certain means the same as an Atheist; they differ but in name. He would not allow this, with him the Deity is neither omnipotent, omnipresent, nor identical. He destroys, too, all those predicates in *non*, against which they entered their protest. He says, that God is comprehensible, not doubting but an adequate exertion of reason (which, he says, is by no means to be despaired of) would lead us from a contemplation of his works to a definite knowledge of his attributes, which are not unlimited. Now, here is a new kind of God for you!

In practice, such a Deist as this, is, as they told him, an Atheist; for he believes that the Creator is by no means perfect, but composed of good and evil, like man, and producing that mixture of these principles which is evident everywhere. He is a man of cultivated mind, and certainly exalted notions, and his friends do not entirely despair of rescuing him out of this damnable heresy from reason. His wife is a most sensible woman; she is by no means a bigot, but rather Deistically given. It is a curious fact that they were married when they were both Wesleyan Methodists, and subsequently converted each other.

Solitude is most horrible, in despite of the ἀφιλαντία, which, perhaps, vanity has a great share in; but certainly not with my own good will. I cannot endure the horror, the evil, which comes to *self* in solitude.

I spend most of my time at Miss Westbrook's. I was a great deal too hasty in criticizing her character. How often have we to alter the impressions which first sight, or first anything, produces. I really now consider her as amiable, not perhaps in a high degree, but perhaps she is. I most probably now am prejudiced, for you cannot breathe, you cannot exist if *no* traits of loveliness appear in co-existent beings. I think, were I compelled to associate with Shakespeare's Caliban, with

any wretch—with the exception of Lord Courtney, my father, Bishop Warburton, or the vile female, who destroyed Mary—that I should find something to admire.

What a strange being I am ; how inconsistent, in spite of all my boasted hatred of self : this moment thinking I could so far overcome Nature's law, as to exist in complete seclusion, the next starting from a moment of solitude—starting from my own company, as if it were that of a fiend—seeking anything rather than a continued communion with *self*. Unravel this mystery, but—no, I tell you to find the clue which even the bewildered explorer of the cavern cannot reach.

I long for the moment to see my sisters ; you shall then hear from me even oftener.

I lost three letters, which I had written to you, in my carelessness. Adieu ! My dear friend, believe me ever attentive to your happiness.

I wish that vile family despotism, and the viler despotism of society, could never stand between the happiness of two beings. Excuse the *φιλαυρία*, it would constitute mine, Adieu !

Your eternal friend.

To T. J. H., York.

FIELD PLACE, *May*, 15, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I now write to you from hence. I have at last reached the place of my destination. I know you will anxiously await this. On my arrival I found my sister ill. She has been confined with a scarlet fever. The ignorance of these country physicians has, I think, prolonged her confinement. She is now much better, but scarcely able to articulate from a sore throat. You shall hear more when I write again. I must acknowledge that some emotions of pleasure were mingled with those of pain, when I found that illness had prevented her writing to me.

I have come to terms with my father. I call them very good ones. I am to possess £200 per annum. I shall live very well upon it, even after the legal opinion which you inclosed. I am also to do as I please with respect to the choice of abode. I need not mention what it will be. *When* do you come to London ? at what time ? — a year ; six months ; four months ?

F—— will be written to to-day ; you may depend upon the

execution of my palavering energies. It would be a strange—I do not know a stranger composition than would be the *mélange*, which you spoke of. Try—compose it. I am sure *I* could not. The ‘Confessions of Rousseau’ are the only things of the kind that have appeared, and they are either a disgrace to the confessor, or a string of falsehoods, probably the latter. But the world would say that ours were the latter. Nor could I blame them for such an opinion, as probable truth is to be the judge of testimony, and singularity must be improbable, or it would not be singularity; nor do I think that it has often come under the observation of the world, that two young men should hold such arguments, come to such conclusions, and take such singular criterions for reasoning. Is not the last strangest? How goes on your tale? I have heard nothing of it. As for mine I cannot get an answer from L——. Do they tremble? I thought the A—— printer was too stupid; and I defy a zealot to say it does not support orthodoxy. If an author’s own assertion in his own book may be taken as an avowal of his intentions, it does support orthodoxy. I could not do more, and yet they say *Mine* is not printable; it is as bad as Rousseau, and would certainly be prosecuted. All danger about prosecution is over; it was *never* more than a hum.

I will tell you a piece of the most consummate hypocrisy I ever heard of. A relation of mine was walking with my uncle (who, by the bye, has settled matters admirably for me), says this Wiseacre, ‘to tell you the truth, *I* am a Sceptic.’

‘Ah! eh!’ thought the Captain, ‘old birds are not to be caught with chaff.’

‘Are you, indeed?’ was the cold reply, and no more was got out of him.

I tell you this as the Captain told it me. Is this irrational being really convinced of what men have attained by the use of reason? If he is, he is a disgrace to reason, and I am sorry that the cause has gained weakness by the accession of weakness. But he is nothing—no-*ist*, professes no-*ism*, but superbism and irrationalism. He has forbidden my intercourse with my sister, but the Captain brought him to reason; he prevents it, however, as much as possible, which is very little.

My mother is quite rational; she says, ‘I think *prayer* and thanksgiving are of no use. If a man is a good man, philosopher, or Christian, he will do very well in whatever future state awaits us’. This I call liberality!

You shall hear from me soon again. I write to F——. I

know you will excuse a longer letter, as I am going to read to Elizabeth.

Your ever affectionate friend.

To T. J. H., York.

Inclose to T. Shelley, Esq., M.P.

SUNDAY, 17th May, 1811.

Captain Pilfold's, Cuckfield.

YOUR letter found me here this morning. Strange! you have not received one of mine, and I have written almost every day during my stay in London.

I go to Field-place to-morrow, whence you will hear from me again. I will write to F——. Poor fool! His Christian mildness, his consistent forgiveness of injuries amuses me; he is 'le vrai esprit de Christianisme', which Helvetius talks of; he would call this a Christian.

I am now with my uncle; he is a very hearty fellow, and has behaved very nobly to me, in return for which I have illuminated him. A physician named Dr. J—— dined with us last night, who is a red-hot saint; the Captain attacked him, warm from *The Necessity*, and the Doctor went away very much shocked.

You have before this certes received *some* of my letters. I expect to hear from you often; you will constantly receive accounts from Field-place, whither direct in future. I received a beautiful little poem of yours; I did not acknowledge it, I believe, but I was not the less pleased. It is a melancholy subject, why will you continue to think on it? But you say 'Melancholy is as necessary in poetry as breath to life, the Muses being the daughters of Memory, and consequently of Sadness'. Miss Westbrook, the elder, I have heard from to-day; she improves upon acquaintance; or is it only when contrasted with surrounding indifference and degradation? But all excellence is comparative—exists by comparison; I have therefore a right. The younger is in prison; there is something in *her* more noble, yet not so cultivated as the elder—a larger diamond, yet not so highly polished. Her indifference to, her contempt of surrounding prejudice, are certainly fine. But perhaps the other wants opportunity. I confess that I cannot mark female excellence, or its degrees, by a print of the foot, a waving of vesture, etc., as you can; but perhaps this criterion only holds good where an *angel*, not a mortal, is in the case.

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Why will you compliment St. Irvyn ? I never saw Delisle's, but mine must have been pla——

Adieu ! My dear friend, believe me eternally yours. You shall hear to-morrow.

In haste.

Yours affectionately,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H., York.

FIELD PLACE, May 17, 1811.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

Your letters have never reached me. These sallies of imagination are not noticed by vulgar postmen ! but you know my direction now. Elizabeth is quite recovered in health.

It is most true that the mass of mankind are Christians only in name ; their religion has no reality. So little, indeed, that they almost confess the *world* to be the only reason for their yet retaining their mummeries. Christ is not the Son of God : the world is eternal, their practice would seem to declare. There almost all are agreed, and in the speculative points of religion they seem to be as Atheistical as the most determined Materialist could desire. But what is this speculation—a dry inactive knowledge of what really is, not influencing the conduct ? One would suppose that the annihilation of superstition would involve the fall of the world's opinion ; but if the world's opinion were destroyed, superstition would be of little consequence, even if it did exist, which is indeed not very probable, as there would then be no temptations to self-deception. The opinion of the world, the loss of which is attended with much inconvenience, with the loss of reputation, which is by some considered as synonymous with virtue ;—this is the support of many prejudices. Certain members of my family are no more Christians than Epicurus himself was ; but they regard as a sacred criterion the opinion of the world : the disanonization of this saint of theirs is impossible until something more worthy of devotion is pointed out ; but where eyes are shut, nothing can be seen ! They would ask, are we wrong to regard the opinion of the world ; what would compensate us for the loss of it ? Good heavens ! What a question ? It it not to be answered by a word ! So I have but little of their confidence : the confidence of my sister even is diminished, that confidence once so unbounded : but it is to be regained But enough of this ! In letters, behold me enthusiastic, Quixotic, resolved, convinced, that things shall be as I order

them,—that all my plans shall succeed. But I shall anticipate all your castle-buildings, so adieu to this subject also!

Why will you not send me some poetry? I wish to see it directly.

TO THE MOONBEAM.

Moonbeam, leave the shadowy vale,
 To bathe this burning brow.
 Moonbeam, why art thou so pale,
 As thou walkest o'er the dewy dale,
 Where humble wild flowers grow?
 Is it to mimic me?
 But that can never be;
 For thine orb is bright,
 And the clouds are light,
 That at intervals shadow the star-studded night.

Now all is deathly still on earth,
 Nature's tired frame reposes,
 And ere the golden morning's birth
 Its radiant hues discloses,
 Flies forth its balmy breath.
 But mine is the midnight of Death,
 And Nature's morn,
 To my bosom forlorn,
 Brings but a gloomier night, implants a deadlier thorn.

Wretch! Suppress the glare of madness
 Struggling in thine haggard eye,
 For the keenest throb of sadness,
 Pale Despair's most sickening sigh,
 Is but to mimic me;
 And this must ever be,
 When the twilight of care,
 And the night of despair,
 Seem in my breast but joys to the pangs, that wake there.

There is rhapsody! Now, I think, after this, you ought to send me some poetry. Pray which of the Miss Westbrooks do *you* like? They are both very amiable, I do not know which is favoured with your preference. As to your manner, call it *manner*, if you will; perhaps it is proper thus to express a thing, which I thought was inexpressible. Call it so, then, for I know no other name.

How gets on your onion-loving Deist? Pray, what is there in onions and red herrings, which can make her less amiable? She is not very handsome either: Oh! that is all imagination.

I have written to F——; I wrote the moment your letter

came, and make no doubt but he will think me a very good young man. I cannot so deeply see into the inferences of actions, as to come to the odd conclusion, which you observed in the matter of Miss Westbrook. Where we have *facts*, they are superior to all the reasoning in the world. I should like to see your letter to F—.

Your ever affectionate.

To T. J. H., York.

FIELD PLACE, May 21, 1811.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

She is quite *well* ; she is perfect in health ! Now, that is enough ; we have no fever to sympathize in : but who can minister to a *mind* diseased ? She is very gay, very lively. I did not show her your last letter ; it was too grave ; and I think it is barbarous to diminish what the possessor considers a pleasure, although I have always considered that volatility of character evinces no capabilities for great affections. It is a kind of self-satisfaction in trivial things that is constantly exerting itself ; it is a species of continually awakened pride ; but it is not constitutional ; it used not, however, to be the character of my sister—serious, contemplative, affectionate ; enthusiastically alive to the wildest schemes ; despising the world.

Now, apathetic to all things, except the trivial amusements and despicable intercourse of restrained conversation ; bowing before that hellish idol, the *world* ; appealing to its unjust decisions, in cases which demand a trial at the higher tribunal of conscience. Yet I do not despair ; what she *once was* she has a power to be again ; but will that power ever be exerted ? I do not hesitate to say, that I think she is not worthy of us ; *once* she was : once the fondest, warmest wish which ever I cherished was to witness the *eternal* perfectibility of a being, who appeared to me made for perfection. But she is now *not* what she was ; she is not the singular, angelic being, whom I loved, whom I adored : I mourn her as no more. I consider the sister, whose happiness is mine, as dead.

Yet have I not hopes of a resuscitation ? Certainly, or I would not tear my heart with the narration. But it is necessary that you should be informed of the real state of the case.

I will think no more of her, for she has murdered thought. Yes ; I will think, and devote myself with ardour ! On me,—yes, on me, descends the whole weight of my affliction ! What

right had I, day after day, to expatiate upon to another, to magnify to myself the excellence of a being who might change, who *has* changed? What right had I to seek to introduce you to the destroyer?

I leave Field-place to-night; but return on Friday.

Your eternally affectionate,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H., York.

[No date], Rhayader.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I do *not* accuse you of temporizing, or if I did, I retract that accusation. I have not read *Adeline*, but shall, as soon as I can get it. Here one is as remote from the communications of friendship as the business of stupidity; it is a very high price to pay for the exemption from the latter, for which reason, it is my intention, as soon as financial strength will permit me to evacuate these solitudes, to come to York.

When I come, I will not come under my own name, it were to irritate my father needlessly; this is entirely a *philautian* argument, but without the stream, of which he is the fountain head, I could not get on. We must *live*, if we intend to live; that is, we must eat, drink, and sleep, and money is the necessary procurer of these things.

Your letter was sent to my mother last post-day; she feels a warm interest in you, as every woman must, and I am well assured that she will do nothing prejudicial to our interests. She is a good, worthy, woman; and although she may in some cases resemble the fish and pheasant ladies, honoured with your animadversions of this morning, yet there is one altitude which they have attained, to which, I think, she cannot soar—Intolerance. I have heard frequently from her since my arrival here; she is of opinion that my father could not, by ordinary means have become acquainted with the proposed visit. I regard the whole as a finesse, to which I had supposed the Honourable Member's head-piece unequal. But the servants may—No, they do not even know your name.

I have heard from my sister since I came here; but her letter merely contains an account of a thunderstorm, which demolished a cottage of my father's, I will not, therefore, send it you. Adieu! Each post-day, till we meet, will carry a letter.

Yours sincerely.

The progress of our novel is but slow ; however, I have written *one* more letter ; it is for *you* to answer it :

' I find you still obstinate in what *I* call your error, as I am in what you must consider a damnable heterodoxy. I am truly surprised ! The peep at church cannot have influenced you one way or the other ; but it *may* ; for it is the only sensual intelligence that you have received of this fair one. I cannot call it intellectual, as even in the short view of her face which you had, you cannot pretend to guess her moral qualities ; unless you intend to support, that the countenance is the index of the soul, which I cannot suppose you admit. Will you now, coolly, if *possible*, dispassionately, examine your own soul, and that which now seems almost necessarily annexed to its *essence*, your love for Sophia. Trace the grounds on which you love her, the origin of this passion ; the things which strengthened, and the things which have weakened it. If you will do this, without either ridiculing my difference of opinion from yours, or employing any kind of declamation, overslurring, or sophistry, you will *then*, perhaps, convince me of what you regard as truth founded on proofs of resistless cogency, or, you will come to a knowledge of the incorrectness of your own ideas. Either of these is to be desired, since, if you, or I, be wrong, this error, wherever it lies, will necessarily terminate in disappointment.'

To T. J. H., York.

[*Post-mark*, Rhayader].

I AM just arrived. I have only time to say that I am most sincerely yours, and I will explain on Wednesday why I could not come to York. No post here but three times a-week.

P. B. S.

To T. J. H., York.

[*No date*], CWM ELAN, Rhayader.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

John Grove has sent one of your letters ; I fancy the *last*. I am now at Rhayader. The post comes in here but three times a-week, and goes out two hours after its arrival. Cwm Elan is five miles thence, and I have ridden to Rhayader, and now write in the post-office. Pray write. Confide in me. Believe that I am yours most sincerely. What have you to say ? What, have you no secret ? Write ; you know that everything which you confide will be for ever held in the inviolable confidence of friendship. It would be a great in-

justice to suppose that my own will detained me from York. Nothing but absolute and positive necessity could have superseded my determined intention.

You will hear from me on Thursday, at least, I shall write then. Adieu !

Your eternally faithful,
P. B. S.

Miss Westbrook, Harriet, has advised me to read Mrs. Opie's *Mother and Daughter*. She has sent it hither, and has desired my opinion with earnestness. What is this tale ? But I shall read it to-night.

To T. J. H., York.

[No date], CWM ELAN, Rhayader, Radnorshire.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I had a letter from my father ; all is found out about my inviting you to Horsham, and my proposed journey to York, which is thereby for a while prevented. God send he does not write to your father ; it would annoy him. I threw cold water on the rage of the old buck. I question whether he has let the family into the secret of his discovery, which must have been *magically* effected.

I had, previously to my intention of coming to York, accepted an invitation of a cousin of mine here to stay a week or two ; whence I intended to proceed to Aberystwith, about thirty miles off. I then changed my mind, in order to accompany you to York. As you made no secret of this, I mentioned in a letter to my father from London that such was my intention. He returned for answer, on the Thursday, that I might go, but that I should have no money from him if I did. The case therefore became one of extreme necessity ; I was forced to submit, and now I am here. Do not think, however, but that I shall come to see you long before you come to reside in London ; but open warfare will never do, and Mr. Peyton, which will be my *nom de guerre*, will easily swallow up Mr. Shelley. I shall keep quiet here for a few weeks.

I have heard of the miscarriage of one of my letters to you, by the pillage of the Rhayader mail. I shall write very often, and enclose Elizabeth's letters, when I have them.

This is most divine scenery ; but all very dull, stale, flat, and unprofitable : indeed, this place is a very great bore.

I shall see the Miss Westbrooks again soon ; they were very

well, in Condowell, when I heard last ; they then proceed to Aberystwith, where I shall meet them.

The post here is only three times a week, and that very uncertain, irregular and unsafe.

Let me hear soon from you. I will write every post-day.

Your most affectionate,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H., York.

[*No date.*]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Only two hours elapse between the exit and entrance of the post. Your letter to me was sent to my mother, who is very much interested in you.

I have at this moment no money, as Philipp's and the other debt have drained me ; you will see me when I can get some. Although I am not so degraded as to talk to you of pecuniary obligations, yet is it not almost too bad to subsist on you ? No ! I must stay here for a short time, because to contend against impossibilities may do for a lover, but will not for a mortal.

In the meantime, believe that I am not inattentive to my own interests. As things have been so quiet, I rather acquiesce in your opinion, that artifice may have been resorted to. As I returned no answer, *my* indiscretion, of which I have given two or three specimens, cannot either substantiate or annihilate his guesses.

I am all solitude, as I cannot call the society here an alternative of it. I must stay here, however, to recruit my finances, compelled now to acknowledge poverty an evil.

Your jokes on Harriet Westbrook amuse me : it is a common error for people to fancy others in their own situation, but if I know anything about love, I am *not* in love. I have heard from the Westbrooks, both of whom I highly esteem.

Adieu ! I am going to ride with Mrs. Grove to Rhayader. I will write on Thursday.

Yours sincerely.

To H. J. H., York.

[*No date. Postmark, Rhayader.*]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You will perhaps see me before you can answer this ; perhaps not ; Heaven knows ! I shall certainly come to

York, but *Harriet Westbrook* will decide whether now or in three weeks. Her father has persecuted her in a most horrible way, by endeavouring to compel her to go to school. She asked my advice: resistance was the answer, at the same time that I essayed to mollify Mr. W. in vain! And in consequence of my advice she has thrown herself upon my protection.

I set off for London on Monday. How flattering a distinction!—I am thinking of ten million things at once.

What have I said? I declare, quite *ludicrous*. I advised her to resist. She wrote to say that resistance was useless, but that she would fly with me, and threw herself upon my protection. We shall have £200 a year: when we find it run short, we must live, I suppose, upon love! Gratitude and admiration, all demand, that I should love her *for ever*. We shall see you at York. I will hear your arguments for matrimonialism, by which I am now almost convinced. I can get lodgings at York, I suppose. Direct to me at Graham's, 18, Sackville Street, Piccadilly.

Your inclosure of £10 has arrived: I am now indebted to you £30. In spite of philosophy, I am rather ashamed of this unceremonious exsiccation of your financial river. But indeed, my dear friend, the gratitude which I owe you for your society and attachment ought so far to over-balance this consideration as to leave me nothing but that. I must, however, pay you when I can.

I suspect that the *strain* is gone for ever. This letter will convince you that I am not under the influence of a *strain*.

I am thinking at once of ten million things. I shall come to live near you, as Mr. Peyton.

Ever your most faithful friend,

P. B. S.

I shall be at 18, Sackville Street; at least direct there. Do not send more cash; I shall raise supplies in London. To T. J. H., York.

[*No date*], CWM ELAN, Rhayader, Radnorshire.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

To-morrow I shall hear from you, but cannot be able to answer your letter. The post is here what the waves in hell were to Tantalus.

I have heard from the Westbrooks, and from my mother: the latter cannot yet have received your last letter to me, as

epistolary communications take some time in going to Sussex from York, via Rhayader.

I have been to church to-day ; they preach partly in Welsh, which sounds most singularly. A christening was performed out of an old broken slop-basin. This country is highly romantic ; here are rocks of uncommon height, and picturesque waterfalls. I am more astonished at the grandeur of the scenery than I expected. I do not *now* much regard it ; I have other things to think of.

I have had no cause to alter my opinion ; I do not think that I am at liberty to entertain any hopes. I suppose, whilst York Minster exists, that you will indulge them yourself on my account.

Now, there is Miss F. D. Browne (certainly a tigress), yet she surpasses my sister in poetical talents—this every dispassionate criticism *must* allow : that lovely extract of her poems certainly surpasses any of Elizabeth's, and it was Elizabeth's poetry that first so strongly attracted my attention, charmed, and, as you were pleased to say, bewitched me ; and which you admired, unless you were influenced by the vague, unconnected, prejudiced praises with which *I* would at times speak of Elizabeth.

For the rest, it is *now* far from being *my* wish that you should think more of the past. I foresee that all regrets cherished on that head will end in aggravating disappointment ; I do not say despair, for I have too good an opinion of my firmness to suppose that I would yield to *despair*. Besides, *wherefore* should I love her ? A disinterested appreciation of what is in itself excellent ; this is good, if it is so—but what I felt was a *passion*. It was, I suppose, involuntary : passion can evidently be neither disinterested, or its opposite. Is it not, then, the *business* of reason to conquer passion, particularly when I received *all* the evidences of her loveliness from the latter, and *none* from the former. Ought I not to doubt the worthiness of what depends on the mere impulses of the latter, for what could reason have to do with it any more than with peeping at a lady through a window. I do not know, on considering, however, if the lover would not display *more* reason then than at any other period of his passion, since for *once* he consented to refer to the evidence of his senses. Let me *hope* that I shall be dispassionate ; I did *execrate* my existence once, when I first discovered that there was no chance of our being united. To enjoy your society and that of my sister

has now for some months been my aim. She is not what she was; you continue the same, and ever may you be so!

I am here for the present, absolutely because I have no money to come to York, and because I *must* come there incog. I am what the sailors call banyaning. I do not see a soul; all is gloomy and desolate. I amuse myself, however, with reading Darwin, climbing rocks, and exploring this scenery. Amusement!

I have seen the papers, and Burdon's poem. It is certainly admirable as an architectural poem: but do not let me be considered *envious* when I say, that it appears to me to want energy, since the very idea of my being able to write like it is eminently ludicrous. I wonder whether B—— is a fool or a hypocrite; he *must* be the latter.

Have you read *the Missionary*? It is a beautiful thing. It is here, and I could not help reading it again: or do you not read novels? Adieu!

Your sincere friend.

To T. J. H., York.

CUCKFIELD, May 26, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Inclosed is F.'s letter. Why have I not heard from you for a week, or more?

I take the opportunity of the Old Boy's absence in London to persuade my mother and Elizabeth, who is now quite well, to come to Cuckfield; because there they will be three, or more, days absent from this Killjoy, as I name him. I anxiously expect to hear from you to-morrow. Adieu. Keep up your spirits!

Your's most affectionately,

P. B. S.

To T. J. H., York.

CUCKFIELD, June 2, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have nothing to tell you, which you will like to hear. The affected contempt of narrowed intellects for the exertion of mental powers, which they either will not, or cannot comprehend, is always a tale of disgust. What must it be, when involving a keen disappointment? I have hesitated for three days on what I should do, what I should say. I am your friend, you acknowledge it. You have chosen me, and

we are inseparable ; not the little tyranny of idiots can effect it ; not the misrepresentations of the interested. You are then my friend. I am sensible, and you must be sensible, that it is in conformity to the most rigid duty that I would advise you how I have combated with myself

What is *Passion* ? The very word implies an incapacity for action, otherwise than in unison with its dictates. What is reason ? It is a thing independent, inflexible ; it adapts thoughts and actions to the varying circumstances, which for ever change—adapts them so as to produce the greatest overbalance of happiness. And to whom do you *now* give happiness ? Not to others, for you associate with but few : those few regard you with the highest feelings of admiration and friendship ; but perhaps there is but one ;—and here is self again—not to yourself ; for the truth of this I choose *yourself*, as a testimony against you. I think ; reason ; listen ; cast off prejudice ; hear the dictates of plain common sense—surely is it not evident ? I loved a being, an idea in my own mind, which had no real existence. I concreted this abstract of perfection, I annexed this fictitious quality to the idea presented by a *name* ; the being, whom that name signified, was by no means worthy of this. This is the truth : Unless I am determinedly blind—unless I am resolved causelessly and selfishly to seek destruction, I must see it. Plain ! is it not plain ? I loved a being ; the being, whom I loved, is not what she was ; consequently, as love appertains to mind, and not body, she exists no longer. I regret when I find that she never existed, but in my mind ; yet does it not border on wilful deception, deliberate, intentional self-deceit, to continue to love the body, when the soul is no more ? As well might I court the worms which the soulless body of a beloved being generates—be lost to myself, and to those who love me for what is really amiable in me—in the damp, unintelligent vaults of a charnel-house. Surely, when it is carried to the dung-heap as a mass of putrefaction, the loveliness of the flower ceases to charm. Surely it would be irrational to annex to this inertness the properties which the flower in its state of beauty possessed, which now cease to exist, and then *did* merely exist, because adjoined to it. Yet you will call this *cold reasoning* ? No ; you will not ! this would be the exclamation of the uninformed Werter, not of my noble friend. But, indeed, it is not *cold* reasoning, if you saw me at this moment. I wish I could reason coldly, I should then stand more chance of success. But let me

reconsider it myself—exert my own reasoning powers ; let me entreat myself to awake. This—— I do not know what I say. I go to Field-place ; to-morrow you shall hear again. I go to Field-place *now* : this moment, I have rung the bell for the horse.

Your eternal Friend.

I wrote to her to entreat that she would receive my letter kindly ; I wrote very long. This is the answer. Are you deaf, are you dead ? I am cold and icy, but I cannot refrain. Stay, I will come soon.—Adieu !

To T. J. H., York.

[*No date.*]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

My arguments have been *yours*. They have been urged by the force of the gratitude which this occasion excited. But I yet remain in London ; I remain embarrassed and melancholy. I am now dining at Grove's. Your letter has just been brought in ; I cannot forbear just writing this. *Your* noble and exalted friendship, the prosecution of your happiness, can alone engross my impassioned interest. I never was so fit for calm argument, as now. This, I fear, more resembles exerted action than inspired passion. I shall take another opportunity to-morrow of answering your long, interesting, and conclusive letter of yesterday.

Your Friend.

To T. J. H., York.

I wrote to you on Sunday. Reason have you to say that I was unreasonable. I was mad ! You know that very little sets my horrid spirits in motion. I drank a glass or two of wine at my mother's instigation, then began raving. She, to quiet me, gave me pens, ink, and paper, and I wrote to you. Elizabeth is, indeed, an unworthy companion of the Muses. I do not rest much on her poetry now. Miss Philipps betrayed twice the genius : greater amiability, if to affect the feeling is a proof of an excess of the latter. I am sure you cannot deny that you are unprejudiced on this head.

I am a perfect hermit : not a being to speak with ! I sometimes exchange a word with my mother on the subject of the weather, upon which she is irresistibly eloquent ; otherwise all is deep silence ! I wander about this place, walking all over the grounds, with no particular object in view. I cannot write,

except now and then to you—sometimes to Miss Westbrooks. My hand begins to hurry, and I am tired and ennuied. The only thing that has interested me, if I except your letters, has been one novel. It is Miss Owenson's *Missionary*, an Indian tale ; will you read it ? It is really a divine thing ; Luxima, the Indian, is an angel. What a pity that we cannot incorporate these creations of fancy ; the very thoughts of them thrill the soul ! Since I have read this book, I have read no other. But I have thought strangely ! I transcribe for you a strange melange of maddened stuff, which I wrote by the mid night moon last night.

Sweet star, which gleaming o'er the darksome scene
Through fleecy clouds of silvery radiance flyest,
Spanglet of light on evening's shadowy veil,
Which shrouds the day-beam from the waveless lake,
Lighting the hour of sacred love ; more sweet
Than the expiring morn-star's paly fires.
Sweet star ! When wearied Nature sinks to sleep,
And all is hushed,—all, save the voice of Love,
Whose broken murmurings swell the balmy blast
Of soft Favonius, which at intervals
Sighs in the ear of stillness, art thou aught but
Lulling the slaves of interest to repose
With that mild, pitying gaze ! Oh, I would look
In thy dear beam till every bond of sense
Became enamoured——

Hopes, that swell in youthful breasts,
Live they this, the waste of time ?
Love's rose a host of thorns invests ;
Cold, ungenial is the clime,
Where its honours blow.
Youth says, The purple flowers are mine
Which die the while they glow.

Dear the boon to Fancy given,
Retracted whilst it's granted :
Sweet the rose which lives in heaven,
Although on earth 'tis planted,
Where its honours blow,
While by earth's slaves the leaves are riven
Which die the while they glow.

Age cannot Love destroy,
But perfidy can blast the flower,
Even when in most unwary hour
It blooms in Fancy's bower.
Age cannot Love destroy,
But perfidy can rend the shrine
In which its vermeil splendours shine.

Ohe ! jam satis dementiæ ! I hear you exclaim.

I have been thinking of Death and Heaven for four days. What is the latter ? Shall we set off ? Is there a future life ? Whom should we injure by departing ? Should we not benefit some ? I was thinking last night, when from the summer-house I saw the moon just behind one of the chimneys, if she alone were to witness our departure ? But I do not talk thus, or even think thus, when we are together. How is that ? I scarce dare then, but now I dare ?

I shall see you in three weeks. I am coming to York, in my way to Wales ; where possibly I shall not go. Be that as it may, you shall see me. I intend to pedestrianize. The post-fellow wants the letter.

Believe me your most affectionate.

You will hear on Monday.

To T. J. H., York.

[*No date.*]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your two letters were delivered to me. Believe me that I will not so soon give up a being whom I considered so amiable. I will not yet decide ; but your conclusion is to the point, and terribly just. Unequivocal traces of her having yielded to the guidance of the *first* motives can be found. Are we then to despair ?

But I quit the subject ; the experiment shall be made, and I will abide by the result. I anxiously, eagerly anticipate the moment of trial. Moment ! Ought it not rather to be years ; or rather ought *years* even to decide a question so important ?

You sent me some beautiful verses ; but I am not accustomed to be flattered, and you will make me either vain past bearing, or confused past recovery, if you talk so of my weak essays of procedure on 'the steep ascent' of perfectibility. Why, how dare I attempt to climb a mountain, when I have no guide to point out the path, but a few faint sparks, which at intervals illumine the gloom ? For these even am I not more indebted to *you* than to myself ?

Certainly a saint *may* be amiable ; she *may* be so, but then she does not understand—has neglected to investigate—the religion which retiring, modest prejudice leads her to profess. But one who certainly never has investigated the matter—seen the slight grounds upon which these dogmas rest,—surely the glaring inconsistencies of every system of mythology must

strike her ? Surely she can find benefits enough to return thanks to her Creator for, without having recourse to the mythological personages of superstition ? Otherwise, by your criterion of amiability, that woman would deserve our most fervent attachment who worshipped all the Roman Pantheon, old or new.

I will write to-morrow. I am now called to Miss Westbrook ; I was too hasty in telling my first unfavourable impression : she is a very clever girl, though rather affected. No ! I do not know that she is. I have been with her to Clapham. I will tell you an anecdote. Harriet Westbrook has returned thither, as I mentioned. They will not speak to her ; her schoolfellows will not even reply to her questions ; she is called an *abandoned* wretch, and universally hated, which she remunerates with the calmest contempt. My third sister, Hellen, is the only exception. She, in spite of the *infamy*, will speak to Miss Westbrook, because she cannot see how she has done wrong. There are some hopes of this dear little girl ; she would be a divine little scion of infidelity, if I could get hold of her. I think my lessons here must have taken effect. I write to-morrow.

To T. J. H., York.

FIELD PLACE.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I wish I thought as you do ; but I cannot ; it is all in vain. Unwilling as I am, conviction stares me in my face, and mocks my lingering credulity. Oh ! that you were here ! That artifice the most subtle, of which degraded beings are capable, has been used, I doubt not ; but although this tallies with the wishes of the artificers, a very different cause from their machinations effected it. A change, a great and important change, has taken place in my sister. Every little action, which formerly used to be so eloquent ; every look, which was wont to be so expressive of openness, are enlisted in the service of prejudice. All is studied *art* ; it has superseded, not combined with, nature. It is in vain that you try to persuade me to deceive myself longer. Your letter came this morning ; I burnt that one of mine. I shuddered even to look at a page of it ; the flames destroyed it. Your letter came ; the experiment you recommend has been tried within these few days, repeatedly, but without the slightest effect. Scorn the most virulent, neglect and affected pity for my

madness, are all that I can obtain in reply. 'You and your mad friend! Those, whom I have seen, and who have seen me, make but little excuse for your folly'. This is all that I could hear; nothing else she would say. Then, far from being in the least affected by all I can say of my vexation, her spirits are uncommonly lively. I sometimes attempt the same liveliness, to see if congeniality even in folly would effect anything. No; even this is in vain; she is then, and then only, constantly silent. Oh! my friend, who is likeliest to be right? he who muses at a distance on the abstract idea of perfection, that I once dreamed, annexing it to a being whom one present cannot attribute it to?—one, too, who is, I may add, passionately prejudiced to that side of the question, the truth of which he has not admitted, or rather rejected deliberately.

I shall see you in July. I am invited to Wales, but I shall go to York: what shall we do? How I long again for your conversation! The ideas here rise in solitude; they pass through a mind as solitary; unheeded, gloomy retrospection introduces them—anticipation even gloomier bids them depart to make way for others; these will on: still, still will they urge their course, till Death closes all. Wherefore should we linger? Unhappiness, disappointment, enthusiasm, and subsequent apathy follow our steps. Would it not be a general good to all human beings that I should make haste away? So you stay, stay, to make thousands happy: *one* is unworthy of you; and all my wishes are closed, since I have seen that union impossible and unjust, which once was my fondest vision. For myself, I know what an unstable, deceitful thing Love is; but still did I wish to involve myself in the pleasing delusion. The mist dissipates, the light is strong and clear; I am not blind, nor are you;—shall I be? It is neither to my own, nor to the being's happiness which I desired, that I should longer continue so! Where is *she* whom I adored? Alas! Where is virtue? Where is perfection? Where I cannot reach. Is there another existence? No! Then I can never reach it. Is there another existence? Yes! Then I shall live there, rendering and rendered happy.

Perhaps the flowers think like this; perhaps they moralize upon their state, have their attachments, their pursuits of virtue; adote, despond, hope, despise. Alas! then do we, like them, perish; or do they, likewise, live for ever?

But am I not a *philosopher*? Do I not pursue virtue, for

virtue's sake ? Why, then, do I wander wildly ? Why do I write madly ? Why has sleep forsaken me ? Why are you and my sister for ever present to my mind ? Except when selfishness bids me start at what I am now—at what I once was—Adieu !

I am going to take the sacrament. In spite of my melancholy reflections, the idea rather amuses and soothes me. You shall hear from me soon again. I write very often, but have not always courage to send my letters—Believe me,

Your's ever affectionately,
P. B. S.

Horsham, June Sixteen, 1811.

T. J. Hogg, Esq.,
Mrs. Doughty's,
Coney Street,
York.

T. Shelley.

In an age of penny letter stamps, a frank seems as strange, as in an era of Bath letter paper would an epistle written with a style on waxed tablets !

Would that some benevolent fairy, some kind genius, were able to recover the lost letters which the ardent young poet wrote to his friend, but ' had not courage to send ! '

FIELD PLACE, June 21, 1811.

DEAREST FRIEND,

I shall be with you in three weeks ; possibly less. Take lodgings for me at York ; if possible at Mrs. Doughty's. It is best to be beforehand, as lodgings may be scarce. What pleasure is even the anticipation of an unrestrained converse ! I shall leave Field-place in a fortnight. Old Westbrook has invited me to accompany him and his daughters to a house they have at Aberystwith, in Wales. I shall stay about a week with him in town ; then I shall come to see you, and get lodgings.

How I wish that I could think exactly like you ; that I could effectually imitate your sentiments—sentiments which inspire language that acts almost like magic. When I read your letters, I think exactly, completely like you ; I wonder, I am shocked at my own depravity, in doubting what then appears so evident—yet how evident !

I lay down your letter, I look around me, I consider, I behold

the true state of the case. Machinations have indeed succeeded, but they are the machinations of worldly interest. It is true ; it is true, I am on the spot, I observe it ; I am not only cool, but most violently prejudiced to that opinion, against which now conviction presses.

Yet how is this ? Fallen as she is, I almost think that I could participate in her views ; that I could adjust the glittering tinsel ornament of anticipated matrimonialism ; that I could, like a fashionable brother, act as a jackal for husbands. Yet no ; this were too much. Anything but this last, this only severe trial of prejudiced attachment ! But yet, I could watch her steps ; and even in this degraded state could I essay to minister to her happiness, even when she became bound to some fool in a bond fit only for a Jewess ; even then I could rack my phiz into a smile to please her. But this must not be. I am not thus to be sacrificed ; and much as I wish to think like you, yet I think it were imbecile to model my opinion upon yours in that only point, where there are many chances for my being right, were I the least enlightened of men—many chances for your being wrong, although being what you are. On every other point, I believe that my opinion is yours ; wholly, unreservedly yours. It is a sacrifice which I acknowledge is due to your superiority, where we have opportunities of having an equal view of the contested subject. But here ! Do you not see you are under the influence of a tyrannical preconception, which you acknowledge increases somewhat under all these disadvantages ?

Surely a man under a misguiding preconception is not a judge of the merits of its object, particularly when these merits are principally founded on two, or three, poems, *confessedly* not the subjects of universal approbation, founded on the testimony of a brother ardently prejudiced : *he then the sport of unreflecting sensation, alive to enthusiasm the most irrational* ; he, than whom the gale that blows was not more variable in anything, but friendship ;—on the testimony of one who seized on some detached, noble sentiments, and then ascribed to her, whose they were, perfection, divinity—all the properties which the wildest religious devotee ascribes to the Deity, whom he adores. Had I *then* been sacrificing at the altar of the Indian Camdeo, the God of mystic love ; you, I am sure, will never become an unreflecting votary at its shrine. But I consider, I remember : there is one point of sympathy between you. *Matrimony*, I know, is a word dear to you ;—

does it vibrate in unison with the hidden strings of rapture—awaken divine anticipation? Is it not the most horrible of all the means which the world has had recourse to, to bind the noble to itself? Yet this is the subject of her constant and *pointed* panegyric. It is in vain that I seek to talk to her. It is in vain that I represent, or rather endeavour to represent, the futility of the world's opinion.

'This then, is the honourable advice of a brother!' 'It is the disinterested representation of a friend!' To which unanswered, followed a sneer, and an affected sportiveness of gaiety that admitted of no reply.'

Have you read a new novel, *The Missionary*, by Miss Owen-son? It is a divine thing;—Luxima, the Indian priestess, were it possible to embody such a character, is *perfect*. *The Missionary* has been my companion for some time; I advise you to read it. How much I admire the sentiments in your tale! You give up the world; you resign *it*, and all its vanities. You are right, and so do it! Political, or literary, ambition is VICE. Nothing but one thing is virtue.—Adieu!

Your eternal Friend.

Yet I should almost regret your tale! How I wish you could send me the MSS.; but perhaps it would not be prudent; it might miscarry.

To T. J. H., York.

FIELD PLACE, SUNDAY, June 23, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You appear at last rational. I can find an excuse for madness, because I myself am often mad; but I am better pleased when I can pay the tribute of merited applause to *reason*, exerted, *too*, under discouraging circumstances. Your letter this morning betrays very much of the latter. You no longer blindly consider scepticism as *blasphemy*; you are sensible that what is human *may* be imperfect. From the vivid nature of the feelings which human beings excited, you are unwilling to admit it. You do right then; you act reasonably. I rejoice that you are resolved to think for yourself. I rejoice that you have at length fixed a criterion by which you may be decided on this interminable subject.

Come, then, my dear friend: happy, *most* happy, shall I be if you will share my little study; happy that you come on an errand so likely to soothe me, and restore my peace. There are two rooms in this house, which I have taken exclusively

to myself ; my sister *will* not enter them, and no one else *shall* : these you shall inhabit with me. You must content yourself to sleep upon a mattress ; and you will be like a State prisoner. You must only walk with me at midnight, for fear of discovery. My window commands a view of the lawn, where you will frequently see an object that will amply repay your journey—the object of my fond affections. Time and opportunity must effect that in my favour with him, which entreaties cannot ; indeed, I do not think it advisable to say too much on the subject ; but more when we meet.

Do not trouble yourself with any baggage ; I have plenty of clean things for you.

The mail will convey you from York to London, whence the Horsham coach will bring you to Horsham ; (news !) there I will meet you at midnight, whence you shall be conveyed to your apartment.

Come, then, I intreat you ; I will return with you to York. I almost *insist on your coming*. I shall fully expect you.

Yours most affectionately.

To T. J. H., York.

CUCKFIELD, *July 1, 1811.*

MY DEAR FRIEND

I have dispatched a letter to my sister, inclosing your last letter to me. I shall be there on Sunday. I hope I shall have a favourable answer.

If her interest in me has weight ; if she yet regards me as a friend and brother, she cannot refuse. But no ! This coercion ! You shall hear on Sunday.

To T. J. H., York.

FIELD PLACE, *July 4, 1811.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am surprised ! For the sake of everything for which we live, listen to reason. If you will not listen to me, see the chapter in *Locke*, which F— ought to have read, and profited by.

What is Enthusiasm, whether in religion, politics, or morality ? all equally, inextricably fatuous ; yours is in the last. You seek the happiness of another, under an idea that she is most amiable. Even admitting the last, is it not wrong when you see that you cannot contribute to her happiness, to render yourself unfit to do so to another ? But do I not admit this ? And yet it seems false. Who, surely, is the

better judge? *you*—who never beheld her, never heard her converse, and, in addition to this—or *I*, who—still I am confessedly strongly *prejudiced*—prejudiced like religious votaries, who reason, whilst they can, and when that ceases to be possible, they *feel*. From this last there is *no* appeal. Certainly I do not mean to imitate these. And I still ask, who is the better judge? *I*, as I must be like one of these, or you, dispassionate, cool;—cool you cannot but be, and probably dispassionate. Little as you may be disposed to credit my feelings concerning ἀφιλαυρία, I have here no interest to act otherwise than I say. How, then, do I still persist in—*I* own it; it was the fondest wish of my heart, and bitterly was I disappointed at its annihilation. I own it: I desired, eagerly desired to see myself and her irrevocably united by the rites of the Church, but where the high priest would have been Love; I pictured to myself Elysium in beholding my only perfect one daring the vain world, smiling at its silly forms, setting an example of perfection to an universe. I do not estimate, as you know, from relationship: I am cool, I hope. I should now grieve to see myself sacrificed, when there *may* exist a less imperfect being, and I might be perhaps considered as not wholly unworthy of her.

You do not flatter; you do not temporise; you are as severe with me as *you* can be. I own I cannot bear, you tell me, to see you sacrificing yourself, and every one who really esteems you. I write to-morrow.

Your ever affectionate.

To T. J. H., York.

CUCKFIELD, *August 9, 1811.*

HAVE you forgotten it? Have you forgotten that 'laws were not made for men of honour'? Your memory may fail; it is human; but the infernal conclusions you have drawn, which I see you cannot, will not admit it too much. There are some points on which reasoning is inefficient to convince the mind. No one could persuade me of the tortoise and Achilles business, even although they might say that I must believe it, because they had proved it, and I could find no flaw in their reasoning. I could not endure the bare idea of marriage, even if I had no arguments in favour of my dislike; but I think that I have. I shall begin *à la Faber*; how far I proceed thus, you have to judge.

Your first assertion, on which stands all the rest, does not

profess to be founded on *proof* ; but the long-established opinion—uncontroverted, undisputed, except by occasional characters of brilliancy, or darkness—that it is a duty to comply with the established laws of your country—this I deny. Then virtue does not exist ; or if it does, exists in so indefinite a manner—Proteus-like so changes its appearances with every varying climate, that what is a crime in England becomes not merely venial, perhaps praiseworthy at Algiers ; that each petty river, each chain of mountains, an arm of the sea constitutes a line of distinction between two different kinds of duties, to both of which it is requisite that virtue should adapt itself. What constitutes real virtue ?—motive, or consequence ? Surely the former. In proportion as a man is selfish, so far has he receded from the motive which constitutes virtue. I have left the proof to Aristotle. Shall we take Godwin's criterion : Expediency ? Oh ! surely not. Any very satisfactory general reform is, I fear, impracticable : human nature, taken in the mass, if we compare it with instances of individual virtue, is corrupt beyond all hope ;—for *these* laws are necessary : these are *not men of honour* ; they are not beings capable of exalted notions of virtue ; they cannot feel the passions of soft tenderness, the *object of whose regard is distinct* from selfish desire. Is it right that of these the world should be composed ? Certainly not, were the evil to be obviated ; but it is not to be obviated : all essays of benevolent reformers have failed. Any step, however small, towards such obviating, is, however, good, as it tends to produce that which, though impossible, yet were it possible, would be desirable. On this plan, then, do I recommend antimatrimonialism. It is a feeling which (as we take it, and as it is now the subject of discussion) can at once be experienced by minds which at least adore virtue. It is, then, of general application ; and if every one loved, then every one would be happy. This is impossible ; but certain it is that the more that love the more are blest. Shall, then, the world step forward—that world which wallows in selfishness and every hateful passion, the consequence of an absence of reason ; shall that world give laws to souls, who smile superior to its palsy influence, who let the tempest of prejudice rave unheeded, happy in the consciousness of the *ἀφιλαυρία* of motive. Oh ! no. Can you compare Eloisa and a ruffian ? Eloisa, who sacrificed all *self* for another ! Macheath, who sacrificed every other for himself ! These motives are wide

apart as the antipodes—wide as the characters themselves—wide as virtue and vice. Take, then, your criterion, and measure by that. For God's sake, if you want more argument, read the Marriage Service before you *think* of allowing an amiable, beloved female to submit to such degradation. But you are convinced by force; but I do not admire the source of conviction; it is knightlike. I am no admirer of knights; their obedience was not founded on reason: and if we were errants, you should have the tilting all to yourself. Now, my friend, what can you want with six hundred pounds per annum? Surely you, with any amiable being, could easily live on half. Believe me, these are very secondary considerations. There! stay! I am wandering. But is the Antigone immoral? Did she wrong, when she acted indirect, in noble violation of the laws of a prejudiced society? You will, I know, have candour to acknowledge that your premises will not stand; and I now *most perfectly* agree with you that political affairs are quite distinct from morality—that they cannot be united.

To-morrow I go to Field-place. Direct henceforward there, till you hear again; as, if they have removed Elizabeth, I shall follow her. My letters will then be more interesting, as they will be filled with what is equally so to both. Heaven defend me from a disappointment!

Misses Westbrook are now very well. I have arranged a correspondence with them, when I will impart more of the character of the eldest.

Believe me, your most affectionate,

P. B. S.

Direct, until farther orders, to Captain Pilfold, Cuckfield, Sussex.

To T. J. H., York.

LONDON, *August 15, 1811.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The late perplexing occurrence which called me to town, occupies my time, engrosses my thoughts. I shall tell you more of it when we meet, which I hope will be soon. It does not, however, so wholly occupy my thoughts, but that you and your interests still are predominant.

I have a rival in my sister's affections; do not tremble, for it is not one whom I have occasion to dread, if I fear merely

those who are likely to be successful. His chances of success are equal to my own. He has the opportunity of frequently seeing and conversing with Elizabeth ; yet his conversation is not such as is likely to produce any alteration in the resolve which she has taken, not to encourage his addresses. It is J. G. ; she knows him well, and has known him long. Charles informed me of it, and I left London yesterday, though now returned purposely to converse with my sister on the subject. J. G. is certainly not a favoured lover, nor ever will be. I thought she appeared rather chagrined at the intelligence : she fears that she will lose an entertaining acquaintance, who sometimes enlivens her solitude, by his conversion into the more serious character of a lover. I do not think she will, as his attachment is that of a cool, unimpassioned selector of a companion for life. I do not think the better of my cousin for this unexpected affair.

I could tell you something, and will ; you will then coincide with me. This, however, is an object of secondary importance. I know, from what I tell you, that others might be elevated by hope ; but I would say to them—Beware ; for although her rejection of the bare idea of G. was full and unequivocal, I have no reason to suppose that it proceeded from any augmented leniency for another. I know how deep is the gulf of despair, and I will not therefore increase any one's height ; but must still think how unfortunate it is for any wooer that he ever heard her very name ; he must long for the time when he will forget her, but which he now will say can never come !

I am now returned to London ; direct to me as usual, at Graham's. My father is here, wondering, possibly, at my London business. He will be more surprised soon, possibly !

My unfortunate friend, Harriet, is yet undecided ; not with respect to me, but herself. How much, my dear friend, have I to tell you ! In my leisure moments for thought, which since I wrote have been few, I have considered the important point on which you reprobated my hasty decision. The ties of love and honour are doubtless of sufficient strength to bind congenial souls—they are doubtless indissoluble, but by the brutish force of power ; they are delicate and satisfactory. Yet the arguments of impracticability, and what is even worse, the disproportionate sacrifice which the female is called upon to make—these arguments, which you have urged in a manner immediately irresistible, I cannot withstand. Not that I

suppose it to be likely that *I* shall directly be called upon to evince my attachment to either theory. I am become a perfect convert to matrimony, not from temporizing, but from *your* arguments ; nor, much as I wish to emulate your virtues and liken myself to you, do I regret the prejudices of anti-matrimonialism from your example or assertion. No. The *one* argument, which you have urged so often with so much energy : the sacrifice made by the woman, so disproportioned to any which the man can give,—this alone may exculpate me, were it a fault, from uninquiring submission to your superior intellect.

Write to Graham's : you will hear from me again soon. All that I have told you here is in *confidence*. Adieu !

Yours eternally affectionate,

PERCY B. S.

To T. J. H., York.

CHAPTER XII

I HAD spent several months at York agreeably, leading a studious and quiet life, but by no means a dull one. York, in fact, is not a dull place ; it appears such to a traveller passing through its still, narrow streets, and to a cursory observer ; but there is much pleasant, cheerful society, much gentle hospitality, and it is occasionally diversified and lighted up by various public solemnities, or amusements. For instance, we had races twice, I think ; once on a very grand scale. There were assizes, continuing for a fortnight ; and this recreation occurs twice in the year.

The superb Minster is a permanent gratification, of which one can never tire ; and the musical services are well performed there.

There was no end of pretty girls of all ranks to be found in the streets, for the ancient city was always celebrated as the abode of beauty. It was at once pleasing and painful to meet them ; delightful and dangerous.

There was a nice little theatre, with a sufficiently good company of actors ; in the summer it has frequently the additional illumination of stars from the southern hemisphere. I saw Mrs. Jordan there, and to the greatest advantage, every night

for three weeks. Moreover, I saw there, and there only, a most astonishing sight: two men, in theatrical costume, walked across the proscenium with their feet treading on the ceiling and their heads downwards, after the manner of flies. A surprising but uncomfortable spectacle; the danger of a fall, the risk of a broken neck, are too imminent and threatening. In what manner the feat was effected, nobody could discover; each man had a thick staff in his hand, and used it as a walking stick—what support or assistance this might render was not apparent. Their progress was slow, but it was sure, and without any visible effort.

Whilst I was stationary and tranquil, my friend was restless and uneasy; at one time he was in London, then at Field Place, now at Cuckfield, backwards and forwards; he even paid a visit to a cousin in Radnorshire. I received many letters from him, as I have shown, which I answered with tolerable punctuality; but having less leisure, my letters were not so long, or so numerous, as his. He too often omitted, in his overwhelming, everlasting hurry, to date his letters. Not one of those sent to me from South Wales has a date, the post-mark being only 'Rhayader'. Unless a letter passed through London and the General Post Office, the date was not impressed upon it. Now it is otherwise, and through the mild expostulations of Lord Campbell, postmasters have been induced to adopt a neat legible stamp. If the rule of a single sheet still prevailed, this modern practice, an unquestionable improvement, would be truly useful; but it is rendered nugatory by the covers, which notwithstanding are, in some respects, a convenient arrangement. There is no necessary and abiding connection between the inclosure and its envelope; the latter is commonly destroyed, and then the letter is not only without a date, but it does not even appear to whom the letter is addressed. Formerly a letter was a single sheet of respectable dimensions, with the address, at least, and the post-mark, such as it was, upon the back; but at present a smart cover, like a smart outer garment, serves to hide and gloss over the rags beneath it: thus, a modern letter consists too often of several small scraps of paper thrust into a well-glazed envelope.

The correspondence of Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale, Piozzi, shows how he often urged dear Hetty to date her letters, and how steadily she persisted all the more in sending him billets without dates. Our great moralist might have learned, that

since the obstinate little Welsh woman was so intractable in trifles, it was vain to strive to make her anything better than a foreign fiddler's wife.

Shelley's epistles show the progress of his courtship, and that his marriage was not quite so hasty an affair as it is commonly represented to have been. The wooing continued for half a year at least, and this is a long time in the life, in the life of love, of such young persons. Harriet Westbrook appears to have been dissatisfied with her school, but without any adequate cause, for she was kindly treated and well educated there. It is not impossible that this discontent was prompted and suggested to her, and that she was put up to it, and to much besides, by somebody, who conducted the whole affair—who had assumed and steadily persisted in keeping the complete direction of her.

When a young man finds a young woman discontented with her school, or convent, and with her own family and friends, without much reason, a pretty face and soft manners too often make him forget that she is very probably a girl of a discontented disposition, and is likely to be dissatisfied wherever she may afterwards be placed.

The advocates of divorce, legal or illegal, formal or informal, would do well to remember, that a wife who quarrels with her present husband is perhaps a person of a nature very apt to disagree with her next also, and with all future husbands. Thus, a man who cannot make himself comfortable in the dwelling which he now inhabits, is commonly of a restless, roving disposition, a rolling stone, and he will never find a house that will suit him long. 'A man ought to be able to live with any woman'; Shelley told me his friend Robert Southey once said to him, 'You see that I can, and so ought you. It comes to pretty much the same thing, I apprehend. There is no great choice, or difference!' But we anticipate.

The long vacation had commenced, my excellent and unlearned instructor in tautology—in tautology the most prolix and barbarous—had already taken wing to Northumberland, to enjoy for six weeks the healthy and agreeable diversion of grouse shooting. The artist had left behind him in his studio an attorney-pupil of some standing, and a clerk, who transacted his business during his absence; keeping up with him, however, a constant and animated correspondence of coach-parcels. My proficiency was as yet so small, that I

could not be of any service to him, except under his personal superintendence. As I could no longer mould living mortgages out of reams of draft paper, or study breathing abstracts—abstracts of title breathing doubts and difficulties, for these were dispatched to the master-mind as soon as they arrived,—I soon felt that I was a mere incumbrance in a conveyancer's chambers, and therefore, that the sooner I was discharged the better. Thereupon, to adopt a term of art, I changed my original purpose, and determined to take a vacation. The alternative was either to go home for a little partridge shooting, or to plan a tour; the latter was the more attractive, and it possessed the additional recommendation, that if my friend chose, he might join me and share in my excursion. As to the important question of costs and charges, a pedestrian could live as cheaply at inns as I lived at York, the only actual expense was a trifle; to go to one's ground on the outside of a coach, and to return in the same manner.

The Lakes of Cumberland, or Scotland? By the assistance of maps and guide-books I was trying to decide the question, when Shelley's letter announcing his marriage came, and at once carried the point in favour of Scotland. Book and map concurred in this, that making Edinburgh our temporary home, and the centre of our operations, we might in virtue of long walks, with the aid possibly of an occasional lift, visit many remarkable and interesting localities.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

Direct to the Edinburgh Post-Office—my own name. I passed to-night with the Mail. Harriet is with me. We are in a slight pecuniary distress. We shall have seventy-five pounds on Sunday, until when can you send £10? Divide it in two.

Yours,

PERCY SHELLEY.

To T. J. H.

This letter was written by my friend at York, in passing through at midnight: it did not come to me by the post, but was brought to my lodgings the next morning from the inn. I wrote immediately to Shelley detailing my projects, and promising to be with him almost as soon as my letter. I took my seat on the outside of a stage-coach, a front seat—carpet bags were not yet discovered, but I saw my small leathern portmanteau placed in front boot.

Prudence prescribes as little luggage as possible on a journey ; in genteel society an excuse serves a traveller quite as well as the most fashionable dresscoat ; with vulgar people tawdry finery is indispensable, but the immortal gods hate the man who trusts himself under the same roof with them. The day was in the first week of September, the time of day was the afternoon ; the weather was dry and fine.

We pursued our way northwards at a moderate pace, along a dusty road and between dusty hedges, over the great plain of York. It became dark, and we had supper, whether at Northallerton, or Darlington, I forget ; I only remember, that it was tolerable, and that all our other meals were abominable.

From smoky, dirty, half-savage, but conceited Newcastle, the country was new to me ; the night was fine, but quite dark, and probably cold, but I did not feel it. In those days cloaks were unknown, and great coats but little in use ; I had no great coat then, nor for several years after. To my warm young blood, perfect, irreproachable health, and untiring energy of mind and body, food, sleep and clothes seemed to be superfluities, not necessities. At what point of the road it became light I cannot remember ; it was quite light, perhaps even rather late, when we reached Alnwick. Here we found a filthy and utterly useless breakfast at an odious little inn in a very narrow street. Our stay was short ; there appeared to be no temptation to prolong it, if it had been permitted. I resumed my lofty, airy seat ; the coach drove on, and in a moment we emerged from the narrow street and came suddenly in sight of the Castle. Its magnificent aspect delighted me, especially when I saw it from the bridge below. I have often seen it since ; the first view of its feudal grandeur is most impressive, but the impression soon wears off, one presently discovers faults ; in one word, that it is a take-in. It is commonly asserted that there is nothing striking in the interior ; this is not true ; it is strikingly ugly, uncomfortable, ungenial, and inhospitable. The coachman, behind whom I sat, was rather wooden, like the folks of that region, but not uncivil ; and perceiving that I was a curious traveller, he pointed out a few objects to me. For example ; after climbing out of Belford up a steep, straight hill, he showed me the Farne Islands, and particularly the largest of them, Lindisfarne, the Holy Island : as a boy I had been familiar with the legendary history of St. Cuthbert, and I felt

a strange desire to descend from the top of the coach to walk down to the shore, which appeared to be close at hand—but it is not—to hail a boat, and at once to be ferried over.

I have done this, but not until thirty years afterwards, and I had then the satisfaction of seeing, that there is nothing to be seen. How often is this the case with those objects which we most eagerly desire to see ; and yet somehow they are not the less interesting on that account ! From a hill, a mile or two before we came to Berwick, there was a noble prospect of the sea, the mouth of the Tweed, and much besides ; and I beheld for the first time the hills of Scotland, behind which I was to find my incomparable friend again. We descended to the river Tweed, and passed it by a very long bridge, upon which then stood an ancient gateway, with a picturesque and remarkable effect. Thirty years later, when I came again to this old town to grow very familiar with it, the old gateway had vanished. Our coach drew up at an inn not very far from the bridge ; here we were to remain some time, and to dine. The inn was superlatively nasty, and the dinner impracticable, impregnable. I was glad to escape from the smell of stale fish, and from the other noisome smells, and to take a turn upon the walls ; the scene was sparkling and pleasant. We continued our journey, and after riding a few miles farther I was informed that we had entered Scotland. The evening was delightful ; at some points of the road we had fine sea views, and a bold, rocky coast ; at one spot the guard made us get down and look from a bridge into a deep, woody ravine ; he called the place, I think, Pease Bridge. There were open uninclosed fields, with excellent crops of corn in some places, very clean and promising, and a surprising breath of flourishing turnips, as well Swedes as the common kind. I remarked at many of the farms small windmills ; these, I was informed, were used to turn winnowing and threshing machines ; they were new to me. At other portions of the road we crossed extensive moors ; and we passed through Dunbar, a dirty, stinking, fishing town. We saw for some time the Bass Rock, over the summit of which hovered prodigious flocks of sea birds. On the whole, I found much of pleasure and interest in what I saw of Scotland this afternoon.

Nor did I want for information and instruction. At the back of the coach sat a little, serious, middle-aged man, whom we picked up somewhere after entering Scotland ; he,

learning that I was a stranger, and that this was my first visit to a region which he assured us was the finest, happiest, most refined and civilized country in the known world, kindly took upon himself the trouble of informing, and indeed of forming my mind. He stood up at his place, behind a stack of luggage, and continually addressed me across the roof of the coach. He discoursed, or rather, I may say, lectured concerning the excellence of the district and of its inhabitants; of the agriculture of the Lothians, and its vast and infinite superiority to all other farming. Having discovered that I was going to Edinburgh, he expounded the admirable nature and character of that city, and told me all that I ought to see, and to believe on his authority.

‘You will find it a most remarkable city; by far the most remarkable under the heavens, without any exception!’

‘Yes! And it has a *Review*, as remarkable as itself!’

At that time, the *Edinburgh Review* had attracted general attention. The quarrel with Byron, and other persons of more or less distinction, and the protracted controversy with the University of Oxford, which was in full vigour whilst I resided there—sundry pedantic performances redolent of heavy pleasantries having been published by certain slow-witted dullards of that place—had brought the *Review* into notice. I was tempted, therefore, to try my loquacious little instructor on that popular theme. I had sounded the key-note. The *Review*, during the rest of the journey, wholly engrossed his organs of speech in one unceasing peroration concerning the critical journal, which soon became exceedingly tiresome; and not only tiresome, but painful—physically painful; for I could not show my back with any decency to so powerful an orator; and I was obliged, in courtesy, to bend my neck and to try to look the petulant little haranguer in the face.

Mr. Pennant, with all the gravity of a Welshman and a naturalist, writes in perfect seriousness: ‘Asses are very rare in Scotland; there are none in the north’. But a greater and a graver than Pennant was there; and he asseverated that Oxford was for ever silenced: that University was totally annihilated; she could never show her face again,—never hold up her head; she was extinguished; she must at once retire; she must leave the work of education to abler hands than her own. Shoals of students would come flocking thence by thousands to Edinburgh, to Aberdeen, to St.

Andrews, and to the other renowned Scottish Universities. He spoke much about the Oxford *Strabbo*, without appearing at all to know what he meant. I longed to ask him, what he supposed the Oxford *Strabbo* really was; but I did not venture. He talked very largely of 'Mr. Francis Jeffrey, of Edinburgh, advocate'; but he did not seem to be personally acquainted with him; and indeed he admitted, in answer to my question, that he was not. 'Mr. Francis Jeffrey, of Edinburgh, advocate'—for he always gave the name of the learned editor in full, with the additions—'is a little man, and a very clever man'. Both these facts are undoubted. I had afterwards abundant opportunity to verify them myself. 'He very wisely holds that ridicule is the real and genuine, and indeed the sole test of truth: that it is still more necessary than even the laws themselves for the due maintenance of order in a state of high civilisation. And, accordingly, he has used it most unsparingly, as you will yourself allow, in his critical journal; and he purposes to continue so to use it.'

It began to grow dark; and at the approach of night all creatures feel fatigue, even the most persevering, and grow weary at last, even of wearying others. The little prig himself got tired of lecturing; he became silent, and at some place, where we changed horses, quietly withdrew.

It was the first time I ever underwent this sort of thing; I have suffered it often since, God knows how often; so often, in truth, that being once told that it was impossible accurately to define a philosopher, I was provoked to answer: 'Oh no! A philosopher is a Scotch clerk in a public office in England!'

We entered Edinburgh in the dark, through mean, narrow streets, the aspect of which, by the faint light of dim lamps, ill accorded with the magnificent promises of the splendour of the proud metropolis of the whole earth—of the capital of social elegance, and of perfect refinement.

I remained for the night at the wretched inn where the coach stopped, for I knew of no other, although it was a disgusting place. Nobody appeared to regard me. I didn't understand what they said; neither could I make the people understand me. In truth, they did not care to know what I wanted. However, I succeeded, with some difficulty, in catching hold of a stupid, red-haired, bare-necked, bare-footed, dirty girl, by the arm; I held her fast, and made her

conduct me up stairs to a squalid little bed-room. When we got there, she found out what I required : another light, besides that which she held in her hand, of a sudden broke upon her, and she exclaimed with vivacity, ' Oh ! you will want a chamber '. I observed the impressions of naked and muddy feet, of bare toes and heels, on the hearth and on the floor, but no other traces of social elegance : the young wench was half naked, as it was ; had she been stark, most assuredly I should not have taken her for one of the three Graces, whatever the little lecturer might have affirmed. I took the candle from her, and she withdrew, muttering some words of her sweet northern Doric, which probably signified, ' Good night ! ' The bed was less distasteful than the chamber. I had passed thirty hours, or more, in the open air, on the top of the coach, and had travelled two hundred miles : this was a powerful opiate.

If such be, in very deed, the beauteous city of Minerva, the chosen residence of Apollo and the Muses, the true abode of Beauty, of the Loves and Graces, I wish I were back again at my lodgings in York, or at one of the inns near the Lakes, which tourists report as comfortable ! But a sound refreshing sleep soon put an end to all reflections, wishes, and regrets : I made one sleep.

When I awoke in the morning, it was quite light : bell there was none ; calling out, however loud, was disregarded, my little sylph would not come, nor would any of her fairy sisters, if she had any. I put on my clothes, and went down stairs into a common room, an uncommonly dirty, dingy hole ; here I procured some breakfast, which was not so much amiss. I then sallied forth to discover if the rest of the New Jerusalem was as mean and shabby as what I had already seen ; I more than half suspected that it was. I soon emerged from the narrow streets ; and then, O ! glorious spectacle, by force of contrast made still more noble, more glorious ; I wandered about, lost in admiration. I ascended the Castle-hill, the Calton-hill, my delight still increasing. Yet it was a meeting of extremes : I beheld magnificence—triumphs of art and of nature ; yet I saw many odious and revolting objects, which I had never met with, even in the poorest places in England, and which I forbear to describe.

Having at once satisfied and inflamed my curiosity, I began to think of the main purpose of my long journey—my college friend. I had written to him that I would join him here, but

I had not given him any address, for I did not know any, neither had I received a direction from him. Was there a better, a speedier course, than the hope of a chance meeting in the streets of a large city? I bethought me of the post-office; he might have sent a letter for me thither. I was standing musing on the bridge which connects the New Town with the Old: a grave, white, middle-aged man was passing. I inquired of him for the post-office.

'Come with me, I am going there myself. You are a stranger?'

'Yes.'

'You never saw so fine a bridge before, as this is, I am very sure. It is the finest in the known world!'

'I have seen a finer river; one with more water in it.'

He seemed much disconcerted. I told him how I was situated.

'They will give you the address you require at the post-office, they are sure to have it; we will go to the post-office together; but you must first see our new University, as you are a stranger.'

We passed the post-office and came to a large building, not only unfinished, but not in progress. It appeared that the work had ceased for want of funds.

'What do you think of that, sir?'

'When it is completed it will be a very handsome building, and, I dare say, very commodious.'

'Not only that, but if all the buildings at Oxford and Cambridge were moulded and amalgamated together into one edifice, the effect would not be the same; it would be far inferior!'

I had learned that it was most discreet to be silent. We returned to the post-office. There was no letter for me, but they gave me my friend's address in George Street. Whether he had left it there for me, or for his own letters, I did not ask.

'I am going in that direction, myself. I will point out George Street to you.'

We returned on our steps.

'That is the Register-Office', said my kind, grave guide; 'it is the finest building on the habitable earth.'

I looked him in the face; I had wounded his feelings about the bridge, without at all diminishing his obliging good-nature, so I held my peace.

'It is universally acknowledged to be so! But you must see the interior!'

We entered it; it was a handsome structure, certainly; perhaps needlessly large. We walked along Princes Street together; at the corner of a cross street he took leave of me with sundry profound and solemn bows, having previously pointed out George Street. I soon set foot in George Street, a spacious, noble, well-built street; but a deserted street, or rather a street which people had not yet come fully to inhabit. I soon found the number indicated at the post-office; I have forgotten it, but it was on the left side—the side next to Princes Street. I knocked at the door of a handsome house; it was all right; and in a handsome front-parlour I was presently received rapturously by my friend. He looked just as he used to look at Oxford, and as he looked when I saw him last in April, in our trellised apartment; but now joyous at meeting again, not as then sad at parting. I also saw—and for the first time—his lovely young bride, bright as the morning—as the morning of that bright day on which we first met; bright, blooming, radiant with youth, health, and beauty. I was hailed triumphantly by the new-married pair; my arrival was more than welcome; they had got my letter and expected to rejoice at my coming every moment. 'We have met at last once more!' Shelley exclaimed, 'and we will never part again! You must have a bed in the house!' It was deemed necessary, indispensable. At that time of life a bed a mile or two off, as far as I was concerned, would have done as well; but I must have a bed in the house. The landlord was summoned, he came instantly; a bed in the house; the necessity was so urgent that they did not give him time to speak. When the poor man was permitted to answer, he said, 'I have a spare bedroom, but it is at the top of the house. It may not be quite so pleasant'. He conducted me up a handsome stone staircase of easiest ascent; the way was not difficult, but very long. It appeared well nigh interminable. We came at length to an airy, spacious bedroom. 'This will do very well'. A stone staircase is handsome and commodious, and, in case of fire, it must be a valuable security; but whenever a door was shut it thundered; the thunder rolled pealing for some seconds. I was to lodge with Jupiter Tonans at the top of Olympus. Of all the houses in London, with which I am acquainted, those in Fitzroy Square alone remind me, by their sonorous powers, of Edinburgh, and of the happy

days which I passed in that beautiful city. On returning to my friends our mutual greetings were repeated ; each had a thousand things to tell and to ask of the rest. Our joy being a little calmed, we agreed to walk. ' We are in the capital of the unfortunate Queen Mary ', said Harriet ; ' we must see her palace first of all '. We soon found Holyrood House ; a beggarly palace, in truth. We saw the long line of Scottish monarchs, from Fergus the First downwards, disposed in two rows, being evidently the productions of some very inferior artist, who could not get employment as a sign-painter. We saw Mary's bedroom, the stains of Rizzio's blood, and all the other relics. These objects, intrinsically mean and paltry, greatly interested my companions, especially Harriet, who was well-read in the sorrowful history of the unhappy queen. Bysshe must go home and write letters, I was to ascend Arthur's Seat with the lady. We marched up the steep hill boldly, and reached the summit. The view may be easily seen, it is impossible to describe it. It was a thousand pities Bysshe was not with us, and then we might remain there ; one ought never to quit so lovely a scene.

' Let us sit down ; probably when he has finished writing he will come to us.'

We sat a long time, at first gazing around, afterwards we looked out for the young bridegroom, but he did not appear. It was fine while we ascended ; it was fine, sunny, clear, and still, whilst we remained on the top ; but when we began to descend, the wind commenced blowing. Harriet refused to proceed ; she sat down again on the rock, and declared that we would remain there for ever ! For ever is rather a long time ; to sit until the wind abated would have been to sit there quite long enough. Entreaties were in vain. I was hungry, for I had not dined on either of the two preceding days. The sentence—never to dine again—was a severe one, and although it was pronounced by the lips of beauty, I ventured to appeal against it ; so I left her and proceeded slowly down the hill, the wind blowing fresh. She sat for some time longer, but finding that I was in earnest, she came running down after me. Harriet was always most unwilling to show her ankles, or even her feet, hence her reluctance to move in the presence of a rude, indelicate wind, which did not respect her modest scrupulousness. If there was not much to admire about these carefully-concealed ankles, certainly there was nothing to blame.

The accommodations at our lodgings in George Street were good, and the charges reasonable ; the food was abundant and excellent ; everything was good, the wine included : in one particular only was there a deficiency, the attendance was insufficient, except at meals, when our landlord officiated in person. One dirty little nymph, by name Christie, was the servant of the house—the domestic, she was termed ; she spoke a dialect which we could not comprehend, and she was, for the most part, unable to understand what we southerners said to her, or indeed anything else, save only perchance political economy and metaphysics. After ringing the well-hung bells many times in vain, she would suddenly open the door, and exclaiming, ' Oh ! The kittle ! ' darted off to be brought back again, after a long delay, by the like exertions and with the like result. Her sagacity had discovered that we drank much tea, and therefore often required the services of the tea-kettle. However, if she was of no great use to us, the poor little girl at least afforded us some amusement.

Shelley was of an extreme sensibility—of a morbid sensibility—and strange, discordant sounds he could not bear to hear ; he shrank from the unmusical voice of the Caledonian maiden. Whenever she entered the room, or even came to the door, he rushed wildly into a corner and covered his ears with his hands. We had, to our shame be it spoken, a childish mischievous delight in tormenting him ; in catching the shy virgin and making her speak in his presence. The favourite interrogatory so often administered was, ' Have you had your dinner to-day, Christie ? ' ' Yes '. ' And what did you get ? ' ' Sengit heed and bonnocks ', was the unvarying answer, and its efficacy was instantaneous and sovereign. Our poor sensitive poet assumed the air of the Distracted Musician, became nearly frantic, and, had we been on the promontory, he would certainly have taken the Leucadian leap for Christie's sake, and to escape for ever from the rare music of her voice.

' Oh ! Bysshe, how can you be so absurd ? What harm does the poor girl do you ? '

' Send her away, Harriet ! Oh ! send her away ; for God's sake, send her away ! '

On the whole, nothing could be better than our position in George Street ; yet few things are absolutely perfect even in Scotland, even in Edinburgh itself. It is allowable to discern spots in the sun ; science, it is believed, derives benefit from such discoveries.

At my first breakfast our landlord kindly inquired, how I had slept.—Not very well.—How so?—The bed was so intolerably hard, and therefore so cold.—Oh! There was no bed; you had no bed; I would not have put you to sleep upon a feather-bed; you could never sleep upon a feather-bed; you have a nice wholesome mattress, a straw mattress!—I should like to lie upon something softer.—Oh! You cannot have it! You must lie upon a mattress, a straw mattress; health enjoins it.—But it is as hard as this table!—Very well! Very like; and so it ought to be. You cannot lie too hard. You might lie very well upon this table; it would be very highly salubrious!—I thought otherwise; but it was quite plain that there was no redress. I had got into the land of absolute wisdom, and I must make the best of it: I had come there to learn, and not to teach. I lay very hard and very cold, and for two or three nights I slept little, but I got accustomed to it in time, and slept as well as if I had the Lincolnshire feather-bed, upon which I reposed for a year whilst I was preparing most comfortably for college in the snug old vicarage of a worthy Fen parson.

One more mote in my neighbour's eye, and then I will return to consider the beam in my own. We occupied, as has been stated, the ground-floor in George Street: when I took up my abode there, I hung up my hat in the handsome hall, or passage, of the very handsome house. In a day or two it disappeared; I asked about it, but I could only learn what I knew already, that it was gone. Who could have taken it? I do not know, I am sure; there is nobody in the house except yourselves and the people who occupy the first floor, and they are high people—very high indeed! However high they might be, it should seem that the grandees of Scotland of the first class were not so high as to be above priggish a hat. In those days a hat was a hat, which, in a strict sense, it has long ceased to be, costing then thirty-five shillings at least. I was much censured for leaving my new hat in the passage: all I could say in excuse was, that when I first suspended it there, I asked the landlord himself, a most respectable man, if it would be safe there? He answered—and being a Scotchman, as such, of course, he was infallible—'Oh! Perfectly!' To be sure he added what was said to be a considerable qualification, and which ought to have put me on my guard, 'It will be quite as safe there as anywhere else in Scotland'. I ought to have been more cautious, I was told, in a country where

nothing is too hot or too heavy ; where every man takes whatever he can get, from the Senator of the College of Justice down to the most profound and beggarly metaphysician. However this may be, in those days, as I have said, a hat was certainly a hat ; not only was it very dear, but, what was still worse, very hard and very heavy, making itself felt as well by the head, as by the pocket. It is right to add, that our liberal landlord made a very liberal offer—it was of course declined—to pay the price of a very nice hat which I bought in Princes Street, and in future always prudently brought with me into our sitting-room.

Amongst the many delicacies of the place, and they were many, short bread, to which we were then first introduced, appeared to be a very nice thing—I must now add, for a young stomach.

Shelley went every morning himself, before breakfast, to the post-office for his letters, of which he received a prodigious number ; and he used to bring back with him splendid plates of virgin honey. I never saw such fine honeycombs before or since, and it was delicious. Shelley was for the most part indifferent to food, to all meats and drinks, but he relished this honey surprisingly : so much did he enjoy it, that he was almost offended when I said, exquisite though it was, it was a shame to eat it ; wantonly to destroy, merely to flatter the palate, so beautiful and so wonderful a structure, was as barbarous as it would be to devour roses and lilies. It was far too great a marvel to be eaten ; it should only be looked at, kept entire, to be admired. It approaches cannibalism to feed on it ; indeed, it is too like eating Harriet ! I think you would eat Harriet herself !

‘ So I would, if she were as good to eat, and I could replace her as easily ! ’

‘ Oh ! fie, Bysshe ! ’ the young lady exclaimed, who inclined somewhat to my heresy, feasting her eyes with the honeycomb, and declaring it was quite a pity to eat it : this the greedy poet said was tiresome.

The sound of the church-going bell
These valleys and rocks never heard.

Since the Reformation they had never heard it ; and in this particular Presbyterian Edinburgh, so far advanced in enlightened wisdom, secular and ecclesiastical, afforded us a strong contrast to our poor, ignorant, benighted Popish Oxford.

After breakfast on Sunday, a verbal announcement was made to us by our landlord himself: 'They are drawing nigh unto the kirk!'

On looking from the windows, we saw the grave Presbyterians, with downcast looks, like conscience-stricken sinners, slowly crawling towards their place of gathering. We were admonished—for Shelley said, one Sunday, 'Let us go and take a walk'—that it was not lawful to go forth to walk purposely and avowedly on the Sabbath, a day of rest and worship; but if a man happen to find himself in the streets casually, he may walk a little with perfect innocence, only it is altogether unlawful to go out from his door with the mind of taking a walk of pure pleasure.

After this serious and edifying warning we sometimes casually found ourselves without the house on a Sunday, and walked about a little, as we believed, innocently.

We were taking such a harmless stroll, by mere accident, in Princes Street; Bysshe laughed aloud, with a fiendish laugh, at some remark of mine.

'You must not laugh openly, in that fashion, young man', an ill-looking, ill-conditioned fellow said to him. 'If you do, you will most certainly be convened!'

'What is that?' asked Shelley, rather displeased, at the rude interpellation.

'Why; if you laugh aloud in the public streets and ways on the Christian Sabbath, you will be cast into prison, and eventually banished from Scotland'.

The observance of the Sabbath in North Britain, as I have been credibly informed, has been, since the year of the comet, like the manufacture of hats in England, decidedly improved, both articles being now much lighter, and less oppressive.

I once asked the way to some place in Edinburgh of a staid old gentlewoman: 'I am going the same road in part, and I will attend you'.

We proceeded leisurely along together; she conversed gravely, but affably: How do you like this; how that; 'How do you like our public worship?'

'I have not assisted at it yet.'

'Oh! but you must; you must go and hear Dr. MacQuisquis; he is a fine preacher; an accomplished divine; he wrestles most powerfully with Satan, every Sabbath morn!'

I promised my obliging conductress to go and witness these spiritual struggles with a ghostly enemy; but I could not

redeem a pledge somewhat rashly given, for I did not know in what arena this powerful gymnast fought. I did not even catch the name of the accomplished divine. One Sabbath morn, however, when we were again advised that they were drawing nigh unto the Kirk, Shelley and myself boldly resolved to draw nigh also ; the lovely Harriet would not accompany us, alleging, and with some probability, that the wearisome performances would give her a headache. We joined the scattered bands, which increased in number as we advanced, creeping with them for a considerable distance. We reached a place of worship, and entered it with the rest ; it was plain, spacious, and gloomy. We suffered ourselves rather incautiously to be planted side by side, on a bench in the middle of the devout assembly, so that escape was impossible. There was singing, in which all, or almost all, the congregation joined ; it was loud, and discordant, and protracted. There was praying, there was preaching—both extemporaneous. We prayed for all sorts and conditions of men, more particularly for our enemies. The preacher discoursed at a prodigious length, repeating many times things that were not worthy to be said once, and threatening us much with the everlasting punishments, which, solemnly and confidently, he declared were in store for us. I never saw Shelley so dejected, so desponding, so despairing ; he looked like the picture of perfect wretchedness ; the poor fellow sighed piteously, as if his heart would break. If they thought that he was conscience-stricken, and that his vast sorrow was for his sins, all, who observed him, must have been delighted with him, as with one filled with the comfortable assurance of eternal perdition. No one present could possibly have comprehended the real nature of his acute sufferings—could have sympathized in the anguish and agony of a creature of the most poetic temperament that ever was bestowed, for his weal or his woe, upon any human being, at feeling himself in the most unpoetic position in which he could possibly be placed. At last, after expectations many times disappointed of an approaching deliverance, and having been repeatedly deceived by glimpses of an impending discharge, and having long endured that sickness of heart caused by hopes deferred, the tedious worship actually terminated.

We were eagerly pressing forward to get out of our prison, and out of the devout crowd, but a man in authority pushed us aside :

'Make way for the Lord Provost and the Bellies!'

We stood on one side for a while, that the civic dignitaries might pass. My friend asked, in a whisper, what in the world the man meant? I informed him that a Provost is a Mayor, and that a Belly (Baillie) is Scotch for an Alderman.

It was a consolation to the poor sufferer to laugh once more. It had seemed to him in his captivity that his healthful function had ceased for ever.

We made the best of our way homewards, and at a brisker pace than the rude apostle of the north, John Knox, would have approved of, discussing the wonderful advantages of a ritual, and their comfortless, inhuman church music.

Acknowledging the superiority of our chapels, churches, and cathedral in Oxford, and the vast benefits of written sermons, after having just had painful experience how tedious a thing it was to listen to an extemporaneous discourse; and, moreover, how distressing for the hearer to have to sit and wonder what monstrous extravagance, what stupid and preposterous absurdity the heavy orator, with no succour at hand, would utter next.

The malicious Harriet laughed at our sufferings, and made herself merry with the deep dejection of her husband.

We were never tempted to enter the Kirk again. Satan must very shortly prevail, if he could only be kept under, by our presence, at such powerful wrestlings!

Yet were we, poor Oxford scholars, predestined to undergo another trial of the same kind, but less severe, and far more brief—sharp, though short. It was notified to us one Sunday evening, as we were sitting together after dinner, that 'They are drawing nigh unto the Catechist—children and domestics must attend'.

We had discovered that little Christie was going, and as we already knew something of her temporal concerns, ('oh! the kittle!') we were curious to learn a little about her spiritual condition. Accordingly, we followed her at a distance.

At the first notification, Bysshe, to my surprise, exclaimed, 'Let us go!'

Harriet sought to dissuade him, and earnestly, as if she thought we were going to a place where he would probably have his throat cut. But persuasion availed not. We followed the slow advance of children and domestics still more slowly, and entered a roomy building, gloomy and unadorned like a Kirk. A man in rusty black apparel, of a mean and

somewhat sinister aspect, was standing in the middle of the floor ; children and domestics were standing round him ; we remained in a corner.

' Wha was Adam ? ' he suddenly and loudly asked.

Nobody answered. He appeared to be much displeased at their silence ; and after a while he repeated the question, in a louder voice,

' Wha was Adam ? '

Still no answer. The name is so common in these anti-episcopalian regions. Did he ask after Adam Black, Willie Adam, or Adam, late of Eden, the protoplast ; he did not limit his question, but put it in the most general terms. Nobody answered it.

The indignation of the Catechist waxing hot, in a still louder and very angry tone he broke forth with :

' Wha's the Deel ? '

This was too much ; Shelley burst into a shrieking laugh, and rushed wildly out of doors. I slowly followed him, thinking seriously of Elders, Presbyteries, and Kirk Synods. However, nothing came of it ; we were not cast into prison.

Shelley and his future wife had travelled from London to Edinburgh by the mail, without stopping. A young Scotch advocate was their companion in the coach for part of the way ; he was an agreeable, obliging person. Shelley confided to him the object of his journey, and asked his advice.

The young lawyer told the young poet how to get married. They followed his directions, and were married on their arrival in Edinburgh—how, or where, I never heard. Harriet had some marriage lines, which she sent to her father. I never saw them.

This young man lived in Edinburgh with his family, but at that time they were all in the country : he was alone in the empty house ; he expressed much regret that it was not in his power, therefore, to show the bride and bridegroom hospitality. Shelley saw him several times afterwards ; I never did.

I was curious to see something of the courts of justice ; I told Bysshe to ask his friend, how this could be effected.

His answer was, ' It was impossible ; it was vacation, and all the courts were closed '.

Being one day alone in the Parliament Close, I observed that the Parliament House was open. I entered it, as others did. I saw one very old man on the bench ; his head was

shaking, and he shook the papers, which he held in his trembling hands ; with a feeble, broken, quivering voice, he was prattling something in broad Scotch. Very few persons were present. It was interlocutory, they said—merely interlocutory.

I asked a man, who appeared to be an usher, or door-keeper, who the judge was.

‘Oh ! he is an old man ; a poor, old creature ; a poor, wretched, old creature ; a miserable, old creature !’

In England, such an answer, spoken aloud, would have appeared indecorous ; but we are a less wise—a less civilized people. Probably the superannuated Rhadamanthus was deaf, as well as feeble, for he heeded it not. I still persisted in asking his name.

‘It is just the Lord Ordinary.’

‘But what is his name ?’

‘It is just the Lord Ordinary. He will have a name. It is very like—Oh ! he will have a name ! It is very like, indeed—but I do not rightly ken what it is. I dare say he will have a name. It is just the Lord Ordinary—poor old creature !’ And in this the bystanders unanimously concurred.

I read afterwards with pleasure, and with profit, the Institutions of Lord Stair, and those of Erskine ; the writings of Lord Kames, of Sir George Mackenzie, and others.

The bright lights of Scottish Jurisprudence are not lightly to be contemned. There have been some truly great men in their College of Justice. We cannot boast such names in England among our judges—by no means. Lord Monboddo—some whimsical fancies, such as spring up in inventive minds, like weeds in a rich soil, alone excepted—was a star of the first magnitude. So profound a scholar as James Burnet—a genius so original, so splendid ; a man so learned, so liberal-minded—our English Bench could never show.

It is true that the Lords of Session have more leisure than is conceded to our over-worked functionaries ; but it is even more true that all men ought to have leisure, and plenty of leisure, otherwise they inevitably become technical and narrow-minded, every day and every hour growing continually more ignorant, and more incapable of enlarged, enlightened, and comprehensive views.

From the able and elegant authors of Scottish Jurisprudence I have learned much theoretically ; but practically, and by

my own personal experience, all that I could myself discover was—that the Lord Ordinary very probably has a name ; but what it is, nobody knows, and nobody cares.

Shelley got lots of good books whilst we were in Edinburgh ; where he got them, I know not : there they were. He brought them in himself, as he wanted them, and took them away again under his arm. Whether they belonged to a circulating library, he did not inform me ; or to some public library ; from the nature of the works, most likely to the latter. Possibly he obtained access to it through the introduction of his fellow passenger, the young advocate. If there was any stamp, or name of ownership, or distinguishing mark in these volumes, I did not observe it. There were several French books ; some works of the modern French philosophers, and some of the immortal Buffon.

With one treatise of the writer last-named Shelley was charmed ; he translated it carefully, and, as I thought, elegantly and eloquently. We went over it patiently together, and he consulted me as to the meaning of certain passages. He designed to publish it, but what became of the MSS. I cannot say. I never saw it after we quitted Edinburgh. *Claire d'Albe* was one of our books. It is a moral tale, by Madame Cottin, several of whose works—as *Elizabeth* and *The Saracen*—are extensively popular, especially in ladies' schools. Harriet was well versed in these, knowing them almost by heart. She took very kindly to the sorrows of Clara, the heroine, a married lady, young and beautiful. She had a lover ; their attachment was mutual, and for some time innocent : eventually the poor young lady falls ; and then, having ceased to be estimable, she forthwith ceased to exist—ceased spontaneously, as a lamp goes out of itself, when the pure spirit, by which the bright flame was fed, fails. Clara was the lamp, conjugal fidelity was the spirits of wine which kept her burning ; when the latter is gone, the former, of necessity, is extinguished.

The tale is prettily told, in the same simple, graceful, touching style, as the other novels of the fair author. The principal incident, no doubt, is of a warm character, as it is in many other works of imagination which are very generally read ; but it is handled with delicacy, and with modesty in language and sentiments. The gentle Harriet considered the final catastrophe—the death of Clara—quite as a matter of course—an inevitable necessity ; that the termination of the unfor-

tunate affair was indeed exquisitely natural ; and, moreover, that it was fit this should be known, particularly by her own sex, wherever the English language is spoken. Accordingly, she translated the tale from the original French. She rendered the two volumes exactly and correctly ; and wrote the whole out fairly, without blot or blemish, upon the smoothest, whitest, finest paper, in a small, neat, flowing and legible feminine hand. She employed her mornings thus, whilst Bysshe was engaged with his version of Buffon's treatise. Her elegant MS. disappeared also ; I never saw it after we left Scotland. I think I was informed that an English translation had already been published. It has been represented by reckless or ill-informed biographers that Harriet was illiterate, and therefore she was not a fit companion for Shelley. This representation is not correct ; she had been well educated ; and as the coffee-house people could not have taught her more than they knew themselves, which was little or nothing, she must have received her education at school ; and she was unquestionably a credit to the establishment.

Drawing she had never learned, at least she gave no indications of taste or skill in that department ; her proficiency in music was moderate, and she seemed to have no very decided natural talent for it ; her accomplishments were slight, but with regard to acquirements of higher importance, for her years, she was exceedingly well read. I have seldom, if ever, met with a girl who had read so much as she had, or who had so strong an inclination for reading. I never once saw a Bible, a prayer book, or any devotional work, in her hand ; I never heard her utter a syllable on the subject of religion, either to signify assent or dissent, approbation, or censure, or doubt ; Eucharis, or Egeria, or Antiope, could not have appeared more entirely uninstructed than herself in such matters. I never heard her say that she had been at church, or ever once visited any place of worship ; never, in my hearing, did she criticise any sermon, as is so common with the generality of young ladies, or express admiration of, or curiosity concerning, a popular preacher. Her music was wholly secular ; of the existence of sacred music she seemed to be unconscious, and never to have heard the illustrious name of Handel. Her reading was not of a frivolous description ; she did not like light, still less trifling, ephemeral productions. Morality was her favourite theme ; she found most pleasure in works of a high ethical tone. Telemachus and Belisarius were her chosen

companions, and other compositions of the same leaven, but of less celebrity.

She was fond of reading aloud ; and she read remarkably well, very correctly, and with a clear, distinct, agreeable voice, and often emphatically. She was never weary of this exercise, never fatigued ; she never ceased of her own accord, and left off reading only on some interruption. She has read to me for hours and hours ; whenever we were alone together, she took up a book and began to read, or more commonly read aloud from the work, whatever it might be, which she was reading to herself. If anybody entered the room she ceased to read aloud, but recommenced the moment he retired. I was grateful for her kindness ; she has read to me grave and excellent books innumerable. If some few of these were a little wearisome, on the whole I profited greatly by her lectures. I have sometimes certainly wished for rather less of the trite moral discourses of Idomeneus and Justinian, which are so abundant in her two favourite authors, and a little more of something less in the nature of truisms ; but I never showed any signs of impatience. In truth, the good girl liked a piece of resistance, a solid tome, where a hungry reader might read and come again. I have sometimes presumed to ask her to read some particular work, but never to object to anything which she herself proposed. If it was agreeable to listen to her, it was not less agreeable to look at her : she was always pretty, always bright, always blooming ; smart, usually plain in her neatness ; without a spot, without a wrinkle, not a hair out of its place. The ladies said of her, that she always looked as if she had just that moment stepped out of a glass-case ; and so indeed she did. And they inquired, how that could be ? The answer was obvious ; she passed her whole life in reading aloud, and when that was not permitted, in reading to herself, and invariably works of a calm, soothing, tranquillizing, sedative tendency ; and in such an existence there could be nothing to stain, to spot, to heat, to tumble, to cause any the slightest disorder of the hair or dress. Hers was the most distinct utterance I ever heard ; I do not believe that I lost a single word of the thousands of pages which she read to me. Of course I never dared to yield to sleep, even when the virtuous Idomeneus was giving wise laws to Crete, and therefore I am now alive to write our simple story.

The more drowsy Bysshe would sometimes drop off : his innocent slumbers gave serious offence, and his neglect was

fiercely resented ; he was stigmatized as an inattentive wretch.

A distinct articulation is pleasing, but by no means common. Another young lady was so good as to read to me for several years ; but I never heard a single word she said. However, I cherished the hope, that some day or other I might at least hear one word, as a reward for my patience ; but I was disappointed, and the poor girl has long ceased to read and to breathe.

CHAPTER XIII

It was the year of the famous comet, and of the still more famous vintage, the year 1811 ; the weather was fine, and often hot ; not one drop of rain fell all the time I was in Edinburgh. The nights were clear and bright ; we often contemplated the stranger comet from Princes Street ; and not only the comet, but the ordinary array of the shining hosts of heaven. The heavens are the home of a divine poet ; the stars are his nearest kindred : Shelley frequently turned his wild, wandering eyes homewards ; he was fond of looking at the stars, and of speculating about the heavenly bodies, and of reading and hearing the speculations of astronomers. He had, however, a leaning, as became a poet, towards the systems, hypotheses, and figments of the first and ancient star-gazers ; moreover, his attention had been first called towards celestial matters by his beloved Pliny, the greater part of whose vast and inestimable work on Natural History he had translated at Eton ; he dearly loved to ponder over that author's inexplicable doctrines, and to endeavour to comprehend and expound them.

The modern system of Astronomy is suited to dull fellows only—to mere matter-of-fact men, calculators, mathematicians ; not to poets by any means. The human imagination cannot deal with their millions of millions of miles ; it cannot conceive, cannot form any notion, idea, or image of a quintillion, or even of a trillion : these mighty reckonings may be, and doubtless are, mathematically correct and true ; but they are poetically monstrous and false.

A pretty little milk-white goat, sitting quietly in the shady nook of a galaxy, with two golden horns, one of them broken off and filled with fruits and flowers, will supply a charming

mythic fable, which the lunar parallax will never yield. Consequently, a Quaker Globe Celestial, devoid of ornament, dreading paganism, shunning idolatry, not allowing free play to that heathenish faculty, the fancy, and with which William Penn or George Fox might have surveyed the heavens : a celestial globe, not of a drab or slate colour, it is true, but wanting the figures of the constellations, merely dotted over with stars of different magnitudes, was odious and execrable to the young poet. A globe robbed of all the men and women, of the ships, scales, cups, crowns, of the various birds, beasts, and fishes, that had been assigned to each hemisphere by a prudent antiquity, seemed, and with reason, unsatisfactory and fraudulent.

'Instead of omitting these mythological pictures on our globes, how much better it would be, were it possible ; how pretty, how indescribably pleasing', he would sometimes exclaim, peering upwards into boundless space, 'to vary the uniform blue ground by delicately tinting above us all the signs of the zodiac, and all the other principal asterisms ; Orion in full glory, with his bright-eyed dog, Hercules on his knees, both the Bears with their keeper, " Prince Memmon's sister", and all the rest of that goodly company !'

I soon found, to my sorrow, that my project of making pedestrian excursions from Edinburgh was quite impracticable ; my friend could not possibly leave his young bride alone : to have gone by myself, which I would willingly have done, if I might, would have been unpopular, being accounted unkind : the scheme therefore was entirely relinquished, although not without regret ; and I never could find another opportunity of executing the design, consequently I know nothing more of Scotland than the little which I could learn during my first and only visit to its majestic and picturesque capital.

I cannot say that I never set foot in Scotland since the year 1811 ; for the last twenty years it has been my fortune to pay an annual visit in the autumn to Berwick-upon-Tweed, and then I have several times walked far enough, and it was not very far, beyond Lamberton Toll-Bar, or the Starch-House Gate, to be able to pluck a thistle on Scottish ground ; and fixing the national emblem and flower in my button-hole, as an appropriate tribute of respect to 'the very focus of elegance', I walked back to Berwick and to dinner.

On one occasion, returning with St. Andrew's chosen flower in my breast, I met a brave Scot, and related to him asking,

where I had been and what I had done ; ' Oh ! That is a very poor memento ', he said, ' you should have proceeded onwards to some house of entertainment, and just tasted our whisky ! '

Our mornings were passed in study ; after dinner, we all went forth together, to take as long a walk as could be brought within the compass of an afternoon. We returned at dusk, to draw refreshment from ' the kettle ', brewing, not punch, but the sober beverage of tea ; and we listened to Harriet reading aloud until bed-time. I often stole out alone, generally before breakfast, to inspect such objects as were not interesting to my young friends. Our time wore away thus very agreeably, and not without improvement.

At the end of six weeks, it was necessary that I should return to York. It was agreed that we should travel thither together, in order that they might remain with me there, according to Bysshe's favourite phrase, ' for ever ', or in ordinary, unpoetic language, during the year which I was to spend in that city ; and at the conclusion of that period we were all to remove to London, and to dwell there together ' for ever ', writing, reading, and being read to.

A dispensation was reluctantly granted to me, but without absolution, by the philosophers to pursue, to my inevitable destruction, the vile and degrading study of the law. It was granted, I believe, because it was considered that my own sagacity, and their arguments and persuasions, would in a very short time induce me to abandon it.

At Edinburgh, as elsewhere, Bysshe received many letters. His uncle, Captain Pilfold, was the most useful of his correspondents at that time, for not only did he write cheerful, friendly, hearty letters, some of which I read, but he kindly supplied his peccant nephew with money. The cloud-compelling son of Sir Bysshe was fulminating and furious, darting his franked lightnings on all sides. His letter to my father is a good specimen of a mild thunderbolt.

FIELD PLACE, 8th September, 1811.

DEAR SIR,

I wrote to you from London by the advice of a gentleman in the law, who I had advised with respecting my son having withdrawn himself from my protection, and set off for Scotland with a young female, though at that time it was conjectured he might make York in his way.

This morning I have a letter from a gentleman, who had heard from him, that he was at Edinburgh, and that H. had joined him there. I think it right to give you the information, as from one parent to another, both of whom have experienced so much affliction and anxiety. God only knows what can be the end of all this disobedience.

I am, Sir,
Your very obedient servant,
T. SHELLEY.

To J. H., Norton.

The old ex-coffeehouse keeper was bound in decency to affect to be very angry ; to tie his purse-strings tight, and tightly to button up his breeches pockets, as a mode of displaying virtuous indignation, which is rather palatable than painful to a parsimonious person. He felt no pangs, therefore, and found no difficulty in being exceedingly angry with his disobedient daughter and rebellious son-in-law after this thrifty fashion. And indeed his careful habits, not less than his Israelitish aspect, had won for him, as his daughter Harriet informed me, the designation of ' Jew Westbrook '.

The hero of the Nile, the conqueror of Aboukir Bay, the gallant Captain, was more genial and considerate than the parliament-man and the vintner : ' To be confoundedly angry ', he wrote, ' is all very well ; but to stop the supplies is a great deal too bad ! ' Our journey was to be performed by post-chaise, in compliment to the lady, and for her particular convenience. There was nothing, as far as I remember, pleasing or curious in my return to York. We endeavoured to dine at the Press Inn, where we were execrably entertained : we passed the first night at Belford comfortably. I pointed out to Shelley the fine crops of turnips, to which the priggish lecturer on the top of the coach had called my attention, on my way to Edinburgh, and I spoke of the noble fields of barley.

Poor Harriet was not much of a farmer. Idomeneus had taught her many valuable things, but not agriculture, which, however, in his sage laws, he highly honoured.

' Pray tell me, Bysshe ', she asked, ' which are the turnips, and which is the barley ? '

' Why, you little Cockney ', Shelley, the heir of entail to broad lands, exclaimed, ' surely you know turnips from barley ! '

It was the end of October : the fine weather had come to an

end at last ; rain was brewing after the long drought ; and indeed it rained a little at intervals. Travelling by post-chaise was always disagreeable to me ; the necessity of changing the chaise every post was troublesome and unpleasant. Shelley could not bear restraint of any kind ; he hated the confinement excessively ; and besides the ordinary trouble of changing, paying, looking after the luggage, and the innumerable worthless, but inestimable and indispensable, articles which a lady must carry with her on a journey, on this occasion there was the extraordinary trouble, and a very great one it was, of looking after Shelley himself, lest perchance he should suddenly vanish, and by his disappearance delay our farther progress for an indefinite period.

Once, at Berwick, when Harriet had taken her seat, and all was ready, Bysshe was missing ; but he was retaken on fresh pursuit, being captured by myself, as he was standing on the Walls in a drizzling rain, gazing mournfully at the wild and dreary sea, with looks not less wild and dreary.

The next day we reached Darlington, and were lodged and treated there sufficiently well. Shelley had been much struck in the morning by the majestic exterior of Alnwick Castle, and diverted by the strange stone figures on the battlements, savouring less of the Middle Ages than of Sadler's Wells. The next and third day completed our journey, and brought us to York. The weather was gloomy, misty, rainy, and altogether dispiriting, and the young travellers met with nothing to amuse or rouse them. Harriet read aloud in the chaise, almost incessantly, Holcroft's Novels. The rigid, Spartan, iron tone of that stern author was not encouraging. Bysshe sometimes sighed deeply.

'Is it necessary to read all that, Harriet dear ?' he inquired pathetically

'Yes ! absolutely.'

'Cannot you skip some part ?'

'No ! it is impossible !'

A poet is a creature of first impressions. The greater the poet, the more completely is he subjugated by this law of poetic temperament. The aspect of the narrow, crooked old streets of York may be remarkable, peculiar, to an antiquary even pleasing, but is never cheerful, not in the brightest weather. At the close of a dull, autumnal day, in rain and in mud, it was oppressive. For weeks, for months, the imaginative Bysshe had set his heart upon joining me at York, which

place, no doubt, his warm, creative fancy had painted as a bower of beauty and of bliss ; the reality, seen, moreover, to great disadvantage, at once disenchanted him.

For the convenience of my friends, I had delayed my return for a few days—for a very few days only ; the woman with whom I had lodged took advantage of the delay, as such people invariably do when anything is to be gotten—even Methodists, saints, Babes of Grace, their superior sanctity notwithstanding, readily give in to such mundane tricks—and she had let the whole of her house very advantageously to a family for the winter. Instead of going straight to my most comfortable lodgings, as we had anticipated, it was necessary to undertake the very unpoetic task—for Shelley positively refused to pass the night at an inn—of seeking for lodgings in a provincial town, in the dim twilight, and in mizzling rain. I engaged apartments, not because I liked their appearance, but by reason of the extreme impatience of my friend, at the dingy dwelling of certain dingy old milliners.

On circuit and other dull errands, it has been my hard fate too often to lodge with dress-makers, or mantua-makers, and I have often wondered when and where the dresses, which these females professed to make, were really made, since no trace of them ever appeared. Still more have I wondered by what persons such secret mantuas and mantles were worn ; whether by sister spectres in churchyards, or by grim hags, like themselves, at witches' Sabbaths.

We entered upon our dim abode immediately—immediately, that was indispensable ; and we procured dinner from an inn ; for the weird sisters were above doing anything useful, or indeed anything at all, that I could ever discover. The house was dismal and poverty-stricken, and the mistresses of the house were disobliging : I did not make them less so by an ill-timed joke. It was doubtless improper to joke in the presence of two ancient damsels, with whom the sole business of a long life had been to disprove the assertion that life is a jest, and to demonstrate that it is something exquisitely serious and tiresome. I had occasion to go into their private room, a back parlour, and to wait there a while. It seemed proper to say something to them.

'You are dress-makers, I believe ?'

Both in unison responded : 'We are.'

'But where, dear ladies, are the dresses which you make ?'

They seemed disconcerted at the question, and displeased, and returned no answer.

'I suppose you make dresses for "the Invisible Lady"!—invisible dresses!'

A little before that time there had been an exhibition, which was very popular everywhere, and particularly so at York. It has long been discontinued, but it was very attractive in its day, and very remarkable; and it has never been distinctly explained how it was managed. The visitor entered a room; from the middle of the ceiling hung by a silken cord, a balloon of silk about a yard in diameter; it was open at the bottom, and was seen to be quite empty. There were two tubes of brass terminating in the balloon. Through one of them the question was proposed in a whisper; by the other the answer of the 'Invisible Lady' was returned.

I once went to see the 'Invisible Lady', as the phrase was; and having convinced myself by looking into the balloon, and moving it about, that she was really invisible, I had the temerity to whisper, very gently, 'Were you ever in love, my dear?'

I then placed my ear close to the other tube, and a feminine voice softly whispered back, 'Never, till I saw you'

The answer, containing such an avowal, I had the discretion, notwithstanding the importunities of my companions, to keep to myself.

The next morning, after my return to York, I went betimes to Chambers, where I was cordially received by my Conveyancer; he told me that he was very full of business, but he found time to laugh heartily at some of my adventures in Scotland, and to express a wish that he had been with me. I remained at Chambers until dinner time; and I had the satisfaction to surrender an out-standing term to attend upon the Inheritance.

The next morning also, Bysshe announced that he must go to London that night by the mail, to see Whitton.

'What, so soon? Put it off for a few days!'

'It is absolutely necessary to see him immediately; I must go.'

For any good the poor fellow got by seeing Whitton, he might just as well have postponed his visit indefinitely, even until this hour. However, Bysshe departed, as he had resolved to do.

I was obliged—morally obliged—to attend my Convey-

ancer ; consequently, I went to his Chambers every morning, immediately after breakfast, at nine o'clock, and I remained there until the hour of dinner, five. Poor Harriet was very lonely ; the weather was rainy ; and when it was fair she did not go out, having unfortunately transplanted her London notions of propriety to York : she considered it incorrect to walk in the streets of that quiet city by herself. In the evening, she read aloud to me Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives*, some of Dr. Robertson's historical works, and other staid and instructive books. Whenever she conversed, after duly and dutifully wondering what Bysshe was about at that moment, she spoke in the style of an inspired prophetess of a glorious advent ; of the impending commencement of a new millennium of happiness ; of the instant return of the golden age ; of the coming of Eliza, who was to accompany Bysshe when he returned. This harbinger of all felicity was her sister ; she had no brothers, and only one sister, an elder sister ; old enough, indeed, to have been her mother. She bore her sister great love, or perhaps she had entire faith in her ; she worshipped her, not so much through a feeling of veneration, but a strong sense of paramount duty, and yielded her implicit, unreasoning obedience. Her mother was as dignified as silk and satin could make her, and was fully capable of sitting all day long with her hands before her, but utterly incapable of aught besides, good, or bad, except possibly of hearing herself addressed occasionally as, Mamma. Eliza had tended, guided, and ruled Harriet from her earliest infancy ; she doubtless had married her, had made the match, had put her up to everything that was to be said, or done, as Shelley's letters plainly show ; and she was now about to come on board again, after a short absence on shore, to hoist her flag at the mast head, to take the entire command, and for ever to regulate and direct the whole course of her married life. Eliza, I was told, was beautiful, exquisitely beautiful ; an elegant figure, full of grace ; her face was lovely, —dark bright eyes ; jet black hair, glossy ; a crop upon which she bestowed the care it merited—almost all her time ; and she was so sensible, so amiable, so good !

Bysshe's return was ardently desired ; partly for his own sake, but principally on account of the lost treasure, which he was to restore, and whose protracted absence began to be severely felt, on account of the rich freight of beauty and virtue which the homeward-bound vessel would surely bring back.

One evening, I returned to our lodgings from a stroll after

dinner, and found to my surprise that the peerless Eliza had arrived.

Harriet was seated on the sofa by the side of her good genius, her guardian angel, her familiar demon :—‘ Eliza has come ; was it not good of her ; so kind ? ’ I was presented to her. She hardly deigned to notice me.

Such neglect on the part of so superior a being, although a barmaid by origin, or at best a daughter of the house, appeared reasonable enough.

‘ I thought Bysshe was to have brought you with him.’

‘ Oh dear, no ! ’

The tea things were on the table ; the new comer was of too sublime a nature to endure the contact of a tea-pot, and poor Harriet’s being was too highly sublimated by the august presence to attend, as usual, to the vulgar requisitions of the tea-table. The case was important and urgent.

‘ Shall I make tea ? ’

This was not forbidden, and it was made. Eliza looked contemptuously at the cup of tea, which I placed before her. Harriet descended from the seventh heaven so far as to stir, and even to sip her tea. I helped myself freely, like a good Philistine as I was, whilst the music of the spheres held its thrilling course. Poor little Harriet was wrapt in ecstasy ; she whispered inaudibly to Eliza : Eliza sighed, and returned a still lower whisper.

I had ample leisure to contemplate the acquisition to our domestic circle. She was older than I had expected, and she looked much older than she was. The lovely face was seamed with smallpox, and of a dead white, as faces so much marked and scarred commonly are ; as white indeed, as a mass of boiled rice, but of a dingy hue, like rice boiled in dirty water. The eyes were dark, but dull, and without meaning ; the hair was black and glossy, but coarse ; and there was the admired crop—a long crop, much like the tail of a horse—a switch tail. The fine figure was meagre, prim, and constrained. The beauty, the grace, and the elegance existed, no doubt, in their utmost perfection, but only in the imagination of her partial young sister. Her father, as Harriet told me, was familiarly called ‘ Jew Westbrook ’, and Eliza greatly resembled one of the dark-eyed daughters of Judah.

On the day after the auspicious arrival of the amiable stranger, Bysshe returned from London ; his negotiations had been unsuccessful ; his long, fatiguing, and expensive journey

had been undertaken in vain. Diplomatic notes without stint; protocols, deuterocols, and chiliostocols innumerable; articles of honourable capitulation, projects of treaties of alliance, offensive and defensive, claims and counter-claims; rigmarole, solemn, stupid, barbarous, and ungrammatical; such were the fruits of these conferences. The whole history of diplomacy, public or secret, can supply nothing more empty and effete than the negotiations with his Excellency the Great Plenipotentiary, Whitton: an impartial posterity, however, will ascribe the failure in these transactions rather to the Emperor and Autocrat, than to his accredited minister. The State Papers which were transmitted on the present occasion, will show, once for all, in how ungenial and unsatisfactory a manner they wasted their time and strength in vain bickerings, without the sinews of war, or the sure bond of peace—money.

[Copy.]

GREAT JAMES STREET, 23rd October, 1811.

SIR,

Your letter of the 20th instant came to my hands after the post of yesterday. Your father's communications to me have been of a very painful nature, resulting from the manner in which you have treated and written to and of him. He stated to me his determination not to supply you with any money until he shall be satisfied that your future conduct will be directed by a judgment more consonant to your duty to him as your parent, and his and your situation. As, therefore, it remains with you to seek a restoration of confidence in your father towards you, and as the question is to his injured feelings a matter of serious consideration, I beg to say, that it is my wish you should not take the proposed journey to London, but that your communication may be in writing, for by so doing I shall avoid the inconvenience which may result from my reporting to your father the import of what you might think proper to say.

I am, Sir, your humble servant,

WM. WHITTON.

To P. B. Shelley, Esq., Captain Pilfold's, R.N.,
Cuckfield, Sussex.

GREAT JAMES STREET, 23rd October, 1811.

Mr. Whitton sends Mr. P. B. Shelley a copy of the letter he addressed to him by the post of yesterday, and which Mr. Whit-

ton considers to be a direct reply to the note which Mr. P. B. Shelley sent to him last night at Camberwell.

Please to direct any further communications to Great James Street, with Mr. Whitton's compliments.

To P. B. S., Turk's Coffee House, Strand.

CHAPTER XIV

THE arrival of Bysshe was acknowledged by Harriet, but it was plain that he had been superseded; Eliza once or twice betrayed a faint consciousness of his presence, as if the lamp of her life had been faintly glimmering in its socket, which fortunately it was not; that was all the notice she took of her sister's husband. His course, therefore, was plain; his peace might have been assured; whether his happiness would ever have been great, may well be doubted. It was absolutely necessary to declare peremptorily, 'Either Eliza goes, or I go'; and instantly to act upon the declaration. This so necessary course the poor fellow did not take; and it is certain that the Divine Poet could not have taken it, for with superhuman strength weakness less than human was strangely blended; accordingly, from the days of the blessed advent, our destinies were entirely changed. The house lay, as it were, under an interdict; all our accustomed occupations were suspended; study was forbidden; reading was injurious—to read aloud might terminate fatally; to go abroad was death, to stay at home the grave! Bysshe became nothing; I, of course, very much less than nothing—a negative quantity of a very high figure.

Harriet still existed, it was true; but her existence was to be in future a seraphic life, a beatific vision, to be passed exclusively in the assiduous contemplation of Eliza's infinite perfections.

That all this was very well meant, very disinterested, kind, benevolent, sisterly, it would be unjust to deny, or even to doubt; but it was all the more pernicious on that account.

Before the angelic visit we had never heard of Harriet's nerves, we had never once suspected that such organs existed; now we heard of little else. 'Dearest Harriet, you must not do that; think of your nerves; only consider, dearest, the state of your nerves; Harriet, dear, you must not eat this;

you are not going to drink that, surely ; whatever will become of your poor nerves ? Gracious heaven ! What would Miss Warne say ?

Miss Warne was the highest sanction ; her name was often invoked, and her judgment appealed to. 'What will Miss Warne say ?' That single, simple, but momentous question set every other question at rest.

Who was Miss Warne ? I inquired of the now nervous Harriet. She informed me, that she stood in the same relation to some coffee-house or hotel in London, as the lovely Eliza ; she was a daughter of the house ; a mature virgin also, quite ripe, perhaps rather too mellow ; a prim old maid indeed, an old frump, she said ; there was nothing particular about her in any way ; but Eliza had the highest opinion of Miss Warne ; she had been long her bosom friend !

Eliza was vigilant, keeping a sharp look-out after the nerves ; yet was she frequently off duty ; her time was chiefly spent in her bed-room. What does that dear Eliza do alone in her bed-room ? Does she read ? No.—Does she work ? Never.—Does she write ? No.—What does she do, then ?

Harriet came quite close to me, and answered in a whisper, lest peradventure her sister should hear her, with the serious air of one who communicates some profound and weighty secret. 'She brushes her hair !' The coarse black hair was glossy, no doubt ; but to give daily sixteen hours out of four-and-twenty to it, was certainly to bestow much time on a crop. Yet it was by no means impossible, that whilst she plied her hair-brush, she was revolving in her mind dearest Harriet's best interests ; or seriously reflecting upon what Miss Warne would say.

The poor Poet was overwhelmed by the affectionate invasion ; he lay prostrated and helpless, under the insupportable pressure of our domiciliary visit ; but the good Harriet knew how, school-girl like, and contrary to her sisterly allegiance, sometimes to take advantage, by stealth, of dear Eliza's absence. 'Come quite close to me, and I will read to you. I must not speak loud, lest I should disturb poor Eliza.'

Sometimes she could escape for a short walk before dinner. One day, whilst the guardian angel kept on brushing, we brushed off, and wandered to the river. We stood on the high centre of the old Roman bridge ; there was a mighty flood ; father Ouse had overflowed his banks, carrying away with him timber and what not.

'Is it not an interesting, a surprising sight?'

'Yes, it is very wonderful. But, dear Harriet, how nicely that dearest Eliza would spin down the river! How sweetly she would turn round and round, like that log of wood! And, gracious heaven, what would Miss Warne say?'

She turned her pretty face away, and laughed—as a slave laughs, who is beginning to grow weary of an intolerable yoke.

In York, an old English city, Harriet's beauty attracted the eyes of all beholders, in walking through its narrow streets; her cheeks were suffused with the blush of modesty, which made her still more engaging, more bright and radiant; and then the good girl bashfully drew down her veil. Her charms did not appear to be equally captivating in the Northern metropolis: I went abroad with her there more frequently, but nobody ever noticed her; she was short, and slightly and delicately formed; not raw-boned enough for the Scottish market.

When I first knew Shelley, he was alike indifferent to all works of art. He learned afterwards to admire statues, and then, at a still later period, pictures; but he never had any feeling for the wonders of architecture; even our majestic cathedrals were viewed with indifference. I took him into York Minster several times, but to no purpose; it was thrown away, entirely lost upon him. The insensible Harriet appeared to feel its beauty, until her admiration of the sublime structure was proscribed and forbidden by authority.

One day, when we were going together to the Minster, Eliza intervened, and instead of interdicting our walk, to our surprise said, that she would go with us, and inflicted upon us her comfortless company. She had heard of the celebrated window at the end of the north transept, called 'The Five Sisters', because five ladies had given it to the church: the stained glass in each of the five bays had been copied from a pattern in needlework embroidered by one of the five lady sisters. On entering the Minster, she at once inquired for 'The Five Sisters'; the window was pointed out to her. 'Lord! What stiff, ugly, old-fashioned, formal patterns! Gracious heaven! What would Miss Warne say? Harriet!' After this solemn censure and condemnation, inasmuch as the two irrefragable tapsters disapproved of the tapestry, as being ill suited for an urn-rug, the docile and obedient Harriet dutifully forbore to admire the glorious edifice.

'What is your opinion of suicide? Did you never think

of destroying yourself ? ' It was a puzzling question indeed for the thought had never entered my head.

'What do you think of matricide ; of high treason ; of rick-burning ? Did you never think of killing any one ; of murdering your mother ; of setting stack-yards on fire ? ' I had never contemplated the commission of any of these crimes, and I should scarcely have been more astonished if I had been interrogated concerning my dispositions and inclinations with respect to them, than I was when, early in our acquaintance, the good Harriet asked me, ' What do you think of suicide ? '

She often discoursed of her purpose of killing herself some day or other, and at great length, in a calm, resolute manner. She told me that at school, where she was very unhappy, as she said, but I could never discover why she was so, for she was treated with much kindness and exceedingly well instructed, she had conceived and contrived sundry attempts and purposes of destroying herself. It is possible that her sister had assured her that she was very unhappy, and had supported the assurance by the incontrovertible opinion of Miss Warne, and of course Harriet became firmly convinced of her utter wretchedness. She got up in the night, she said, sometimes with a fixed intention of making away with herself—in what manner she did not unfold—and bade a long farewell to the world, looked out of the window, taking leave of the bright moon and all sublunary things, and then, it should seem, got into bed again and went quietly to sleep, and rose in the morning and wrote neatly upon her slate, in the school-room at Clapham, the admirable ordinances of Idomeneus and Numa Pompilius as sedately as before.

She spoke of self-murder serenely before strangers ; and at a dinner party I have heard her describe her feelings, opinions, and intentions with respect to suicide with prolix earnestness ; and she looked so calm, so tranquil, so blooming, and so handsome, that the astonished guests smiled. She once, in particular—I well remember the strange scene and the astonishment of the harmless company—at a Pythagorean dinner in the house of a medical philosopher, scattered dismay amongst a quiet party of vegetable-eaters, persons who would not slay a shrimp, or extinguish animal life in embryo by eating an egg, by asking, whether they did not feel sometimes strongly inclined to kill themselves.

The poor girl's monomania of self-destruction, which we

long looked upon as a vain fancy, a baseless delusion, an inconsequent hallucination of the mind, amused us occasionally for some years; eventually it proved a sad reality, and drew forth many bitter tears.

We have sometimes consoled ourselves by cherishing belief, that if none of those contingencies had happened, to the influence of which a rash act has, with mistaken confidence, been ascribed, the morbid predisposition might have produced the same melancholy result. But he who anticipates ill discharges the duty of a faithful biographer.

When Bysshe returned from London we changed our lodgings, perhaps somewhat hastily, under the impulse of the same impatience which had presided at taking them; for throughout the whole course of his perturbed and restless life, the poor Poet was uniformly in a hurry; his life indeed was one hurry; he appeared to be ever impelled by a wild terror, lest he should lose, or even delay for one moment, any opportunity of placing himself in a disadvantageous position. Accordingly we removed, but with little benefit, with scarcely any visible improvement; however, we quitted the Valkyræ, two of the Fatal Sisters; dressmakers are not unworthy of a place in the Edda, who were manifestly designed to sew shrouds, to hem winding-sheets, to make mouldering dresses for the mouldering dead.

Nevertheless, York was in those days, in many respects at least, a poor, poverty-stricken city, rich only in pride, ecclesiastical and civil, and it was not easy to find good lodgings there: during a year's residence I shifted my quarters more than once, but I was never at all comfortable, save with the most Christian woman with whom I was at first located.

I had spoken sometimes of my intention of paying a visit to the English lakes, which visit had been exchanged for the matrimonial trip to Edinburgh. The image of the lakes, mountains, rocks, and waterfalls, and of the like picturesque and romantic objects which those districts present, at once took entire possession of light minds. The young couple became in an instant, as to their whole souls, demoniacally possessed by the Genius of the Lakes; and it was impossible to exorcise them, to cast out the mischievous spirit, either by prayer or fasting, or in any other manner—not even by bell, book, and candle; more especially since their Guardian Angel, smirking in silence, no doubt, favoured the sudden fancy.

Nothing would please but an immediate journey to Keswick ; and our flight must be in the winter ; I was requested, strongly urged, to join in it. To quit my professional duties, in which I had engaged, was impossible ; besides, the impracticable month of November was ill suited for such an excursion. Next summer, during the long vacation, I should have leisure ; it would be the most proper season for tourists, and we would all go together.

To a poetic temperament, so long a delay was intolerable ; the young Poet's imagination could conceive anything in earth or in heaven, but not the possibility of waiting for several months before seeing some mountain stream ; of living at peace with himself and all mankind, in great personal comfort for whole weeks, without having as yet heard by moonlight the sound of a remote waterfall. Neither could they be brought to comprehend that one period of the year was better adapted than another for their cherished purposes. Skiddaw was there surely, and Helvellyn ; Derwentwater Lake was always there ; what more could they require ? Moreover, Southey and Wordsworth, not less than the donkeys which they had so finely apostrophized and so sweetly sung, remain there all the year ; and why cannot we ? On the shortest day, as well as the longest, although for a shorter time, the parish pauper, Harry Gill, the theme of many sounding verse, wakes the echoes by cracking stones with his pick in some sequestered mountain glen, without respecting seasons or persons, except perchance the parish beadle ; and we are more than many paupers ! To go at once to Keswick ; to go to Keswick instantly, and to remain there 'for ever', was practicable and necessary. 'You will soon be sensible of the absurdity, the wickedness, of lingering longer in a spot so unpoetic and uninspiring as York ; you will speedily reunite yourself with your friends at Keswick, and remain with them there "for ever" '.

A day was fixed for their departure ; their trunks were packed ; they would take a part of their baggage, the rest was to be left behind for me to bring, when I came after them : I gave no hopes that I would soon follow, but they knew better than I did ; and they were confident I should not tarry. Harriet's nerves, it was added, would be braced by the pure mountain air ; the fisc was rather empty, but the funds required for an expensive journey were supplied, I apprehend, by Eliza, who, although she had a laughable way of showing

it, appeared to feel a lively interest in her sister's welfare, and in the prosperity of her nervous system, according to her own view of it, and in which, notwithstanding the appearance of rude health, there might, in truth, be something peculiar.

To be always in a hurry was Bysshe's grand and first rule of conduct; his second canon of practical wisdom, and this he esteemed hardly less important than the former, was to make a mystery of everything; to treat as a profound secret matters manifest, patent, and fully known to everybody. A lively fancy, which imagined difficulties, and created obstacles where none existed, was the true cause of a course of dealing that was troublesome and injurious to himself and to all connected with him.

'How many great poets, like yourself', I have asked him, 'could the world bear to have in it at once, without being altogether ruined; how many of you—three or four—might co-exist in the universe, and yet not induce a rapid and utter annihilation of all things?'

The morning of departure had been fixed; on the afternoon preceding it, when I returned to dinner, such was the precipitation of the young votaries of the Muses, that the birds were flown; a short, illegible, unintelligible note, scrawled with a pencil on a scrap of paper, informed me, so far as I could make it out, that it had occurred to them during my absence at Chambers, that it would be expedient to start at once, and to proceed to Richmond, where they should pass the night, and if I chose to follow them, I should find them there, and we would travel the next morning all together towards the goal, Keswick.

This proposal it was alike my duty and my inclination to decline; whenever circumstances brought us together again, I should enjoy once more the society of my incomparable friend; and should they continue until the summer to inhabit the shores of Derwentwater Lake, it would be easy and agreeable to visit them.

My materials for composing a connected narrative of the proceeding of my friends during their stay at Keswick, which did not last for ever, as they had projected, but only for a few weeks or months, are scanty. I have eight letters, not one of which is dated, either by the writer, or by a post-mark: in those days, unless a letter passed through London, and came into the General Post Office, the stamp bears no date, merely the name of the post town. These give little

information respecting their external world, their creature comforts, or discomforts ; as to their internal life, it must have been truly distressing, on account of ill-health and low spirits, caused chiefly by fatigue, inclement weather, incommensurable abodes, and the want of all needful appliances and resources, especially of money. The purse of their Guardian Angel, it seems, was just long enough to enable her fairly to plant her wards, but not to furnish permanent succour.

'If you dislike York, and the neighbourhood of York, so much, do not remain there ; quit it at once ; but go to the South, to a part of the world with which you are acquainted, and where you are known ; to a milder and more genial climate, and where you will be nearer your supplies. Do not on any account expose yourselves to the bleak North at this unkindly season, out of the way of everybody and of everything—out of the reach of money, and buried alive amongst rude and uncivilized barbarians'. But counsel was offered in vain ; the Muses are not to be advised : we shall see Derwentwater Lake, into which the cascade of Lodore falls, and that will suffice ; it will be all in all.

They had several residences, one more disagreeable than the other, in the town of Keswick ; and one at a place called Chestnut Cottage, at some little distance from the town, which, it may be supposed, had its additional and peculiar inconveniences.

Bysshe's letters will speak for themselves, in a tone of vague and mysterious despondency.

KESWICK, *Wednesday night.*

You were surprised at our sudden departure ; I have no time, however, *now*, either to account for it or enter into the investigation which we agreed upon. I have arrived at this place after some days of incessant travelling, which has left me no leisure to write to you at length. To-morrow you will hear more.

With real, true interest, I constantly think of you, believe me, my friend, so sincerely am I attached to you. I can never forget you.

Yours, Percy S.

Will you send my box per coach to Mr. D. Crosthwaite's, Town Head, Keswick, Cumberland.

To T. J. H., York.

POST OFFICE, KESWICK, CUMBERLAND ;
not Mr. D. Crosthwaite's.

I PROMISED to write to you to-day, my dear friend, but again another day has elapsed in the occupation of preparing our residence, and night has come on, when the post leaves us.

We all greatly regret that 'your own interests, your own *real* interests', should compel you to remain at present at York. But pray, write often ; your last letter I have read, as I would read your soul.

We remain at Keswick. We settle here, at least for some time. I will never go to the South again. Adieu.

Yours most affectionately, most unalterably.

PERCY SHELLEY.

To T. J. H., York.

KESWICK, CUMBERLAND.

YOUR letters are arrived. You did right in anticipating that Richmond was only a resting place, and *Keswick* is our residence, to which place I wish you could follow us immediately.

I stand alone. I feel that I am nothing : a speck in an universe !

All this is true : yet have I not been wretched, and was my wretchedness less keen, because it was undeserved ? *Was* it undeserved ? What is desert ? Are you not he whom I love, whom I deem capable of exciting the emulation, and attracting the admiration of thousands. I have ever esteemed you as a superior being, and taken you for one who was to give laws to us poor beings, who grovel beneath. We shall meet again soon ; but I must live some little time, I fear, by myself ; and if my firmness is not sufficient to bear pain without hope of reward, I know that soon we meet again.

Your letters are kind and sincere. I had no time when I wrote last. If I thought we were to be long parted, I should be wretchedly miserable—half mad ! I look on *Harriet* : she is before me ; she is somewhat better. Has she convinced you that she is ?

Oh ! what a spot is this ! Here nature has exhausted the profusion of her loveliness ! Will *you* come ; will you share my fortunes, enter into my schemes, love me as I love you, be inseparable, as once I fondly hoped we were ?

This is not all past, like a dream of the sick man, which

leaves but bitterness—a fleeting vision. Oh ! how I have loved you ! I was even ashamed to tell you how !

And now to leave you for a long time ! No ; not for a *long* time ! Night comes ; Death comes ! Cold, calm Death. Almost I would it were to-morrow. There is another life—are you not to be the first there ? Assuredly, dearest, dearest friend. Reason with me still ; I am like a child in weakness.

Your letters came directly after dinner ;—how could any one read them unmoved ? Calm, wise ; are you then with me, and I forbear wishing that Death would yawn.—Adieu !

Cannot you follow us ?—why not ? But I will dare to be good—dare to be virtuous ; and I will soon seize once more what I have for a while relinquished, never, never again to resign it.

To T. J. H., York.

KESWICK.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have just finished reading your long letter to Harriet. It is late, or the post is so ; therefore I may not say all I wish ; indeed, that is *not* possible : words cannot express half my reasonings, the thousandth part of my feelings. Can I not feel ; do we not sympathize ? Cannot I read your soul, as I have read your letter, which I believe I have generally considered to be a copy of the former. My letters have always been, as well as my conversations with you, transcripts of my thoughts.

I did not concert my departure from Richmond, nor that from York. Why did I leave you ? I have never doubted you—you, the brother of my soul, the object of my vivid interest ; the theme of my impassioned panegyric. But, for the present, Adieu !

It is nine ; it is ten. Expect to hear to-morrow. I will then answer your letter.

Ever your Friend,

PERCY SHELLEY.

To T. J. H., York.

CHESNUT HILL, KESWICK.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

What you say of *my* superiority is perfectly erroneous. Consider a little, and you will discover this. The great apparent cause of it is my insensibility ; perhaps you are not prepared to boast of yours : I am sure you are not.

If Harriet's state of health did not intervene between our meeting again immediately, to-morrow willingly would I return to York ; aye, willingly, and be happy thus to prove and to indulge my friendship.

' Absence extinguishes small passions, and kindles great ones '. It is so in love, and so it is with friendship.

My friend, you say I ought always to set you an example of firmness. What ! I, the weakest, the most slavish of beings that crawl on the earth's face, to you ?

This is a sweet spot ! But, oh heavens, my soul is half sick at this terrible world, where nature seems to own no monster in her works, but man. They quarrel for straws ; they part on these quarrels ; and two lovers, whose existences seemed entwined, separate because—you can complete the portraiture yourself from my history.

Harriet has written to you ; what she has said, I know not. I have not been able to write for a day or two to you, owing to having been ill from the poison of laurel leaves—I have now.

Your letters of to-day have arrived ; I have read that to Harriet ; she showed it me. I know how much I owe you ; I feel it all. Believe me, your letter has delighted and affected me. I will write again to-morrow.

Your real, true, sincere Friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

Will you send us Mr. S.'s bill ?

To T. J. H., York.

CHESTNUT COTTAGE, CUMBERLAND.

We returned to Keswick last night. All your letters I have found here, which have arrived in my absence. To think of returning again to York at present is *impossible*. I could not consent to the injury of Harriet's health—to the destruction of her nerves. You must know what you yourself are. Mock modesty can never have concealed from you the fascination which your society spreads. It were impossible to think of the friendship of such a being, and not to say that were worthier of attainment than fame, or pleasure, or the attachment of all other beings. To give up this, even for a few weeks, must be a sacrifice—how great an one my heart alone can testify. Yet this I now resign for a while. I resign it for Harriet's health ; possibly for my own (though I think not). I need only tranquillity.

If I were free, I were unceasingly yours, though I do not

think you infallible. I think you capable of great things, and in such, as well as in the stores of such a mind as yours, can I conceive no pleasure equal to the participation.

I returned to Keswick yesterday. Your letters in the meantime were *not* forwarded to me.

Our stay here is *so* uncertain, that I know not one day where we may be the next.

Your real Friend,
P. B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H., York.

KESWICK.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Our letters are delayed terribly—two of yours together ! The thing is, we are not *in*, but near, Keswick. You will hear from me to-morrow.

I do not know that absence will *certainly* cure love ; but this I know, that it fearfully augments the intensity of friendship.

I do not know where the passage exists of which you speak in the latter part of your letter. But this will not do ; I must look for it.

Believe me yours, till you hear again.

I write in Keswick, just as the post is going out.

Your true, sincere
P. B. SHELLEY.

Pray, take care of your friend.

To T. J. H., York.

KESWICK, *Thursday*.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We live now at Keswick. You do not come to us ; but pray, write. You may send my trunk. Open all my letters that come to York.

I have obeyed what you say in your letter of to-day : I have not told you that I am miserable ; indeed I cannot be so miserable as I was when I wrote those letters. If you were to see me now, you would see me very calm ; as I am sure you are. Your long letter of advice has been my companion, my study, since I received it.

Adieu ! Be happy ! My dear friend, adieu !

Ever yours, with sincerity,
PERCY SHELLEY.

To T. J. H., York.

Other and longer letters were written to me from Keswick by Harriet, as well as by Bysshe, containing, doubtless, some details of their mode of life, and probably of their studies also, when they had become sufficiently reconciled to their delightfully romantic position to find solace in study—and indited most probably in a clearer, calmer, and less perturbed spirit. These, unfortunately, I never received; why I know not. I can only conjecture that, possibly, when they resided out of the town the letters, which would have been so welcome at York, was confided to some artless, simple-souled messenger—to some Peter Bell, or other immortal hero of Lakist minstrelsy, in order to be put by him into the letter-box at Keswick, whither he was enjoined to hasten, through the pouring rain, and that a shilling was given as a reward for his faithful service. That the single-hearted Peter habitually repaired to the nearest public-house, spent his shilling in an agreeable manner, and then, to make himself thoroughly comfortable, quietly lighted his pipe with the voluminous epistle, the pretty Harriet's pretty phrases imparting a more delicate flavour to the bird's-eye.

My instructions with regard to Shelley's correspondence were, to open all letters that should come to York for him, and to dispatch such only as appeared to me worth the postage. Many letters arrived daily, but few of them merited to be sent farther. One of the few was an invitation, kindly and cordially worded, from the Duke of Norfolk, to visit him at Graystoke: it was franked by his Grace, and dated November 7th, 1811. The letter was transmitted to Keswick, and the visit was paid. I was informed subsequently that it gave much satisfaction to all three of them, more especially to the ladies: and Harriet assured me, most probably on the authority of her sister, that the Duke was quite charmed with Eliza; and, if his Grace admired black hair well brushed, it could hardly have been otherwise. In what terms or in what manner his declaration was made, I was not told. Unfortunately, the noble admirer was married already, although only to an insane Scudamore, yet still married; otherwise it might have been inferred that the charming Eliza would have been a Duchess; and then, gracious heaven! what would Miss Warne have said?

How Bysshe made the acquaintance of Southey, whether by personal or epistolary introduction, or through poetic sympathy, I never knew.

Concerning the intercourse of these two remarkable persons, I have heard from Shelley, and from others, several anecdotes.

'Southey had a large collection of books, very many of them old books, some rare books,—books in many languages, more particularly in Spanish. The shelves extended over the walls of every room in his large, dismal house in Keswick; they were in the bed-rooms, and even down the stairs. This I never saw elsewhere. I took out some volume one day, as I was going downstairs with him. Southey looked at me, as if he was displeased, so I put it back again instantly, and I never ventured to take down one of his books another time. I used to glance my eye eagerly over the backs of the books, and read their titles, as I went up or down stairs. I could not help doing so, but I think he did not quite approve of it'.

'Do you know that Southey did not like to have his books touched. Do you know why?'

'No! I do not know'.

'You do not know? How I hate that there should be any thing which you do not know! For who will tell me if you will not?'

'I know only that persons who have large libraries sometimes have the same feeling'.

'How strange that a man should have many thousands of books, and should have a secret in every book, which he cannot bear that anybody should know but himself. How rare and grim! Do you believe, then, that Southey really had a secret in every one of his books?'

'No! I do not, indeed, Bysshe.'

After musing for some minutes, he added: 'There were not secrets in all his books, certainly, for he often took one down himself and showed me some remarkable passage; and then he would let me keep it as long as I pleased, and turn over the leaves, if he had taken it down himself; so there could be no secret there. And yet', he continued, after further reflection, 'perhaps there was a secret; but he thought that I could not find it out.'

'Were the passages which he showed you really remarkable?'

'They might be, sometimes; but for the most part they were not; at least, I did not think them so. They usually appeared trifling. He never discussed any subject; he gave his own opinion, commonly, in a very absolute manner; he used to lay down the law, to dogmatize. What he said was seldom his own—it seldom came from himself. He repeated

long quotations, read extracts which he had made, or took down books and read from them aloud, or pointed out something for me to read, which would settle the matter at once without appeal. His conversation was rather interesting, and only moderately instructive ; he was not so much a man as a living common-place book, a talking album filled with long extracts from long-forgotten authors on unimportant subjects. Still his intercourse was very agreeable. I liked much to be with him ; besides, he was a good man and exceedingly kind'.

When Southey died his books were brought to the hammer—as the phrase is. I picked up a few of them, rather as memorials than for their intrinsic value. Several of these were bound in the Chinese fashion, as I had heard that many of his books were, that is to say, in silk, cloth, velvet, and not in leather.

Mrs. Southey had been a milliner at Bath, a certain Miss—— ; a lovely creature, as I have been told, as every Bath milliner ought to be ; and no doubt a very estimable person. After her marriage she used up her remnants in a truly conjugal and most beneficial manner, in binding strongly and very neatly such of her husband's books as required it. I possess one of these bound with a bit of modest gingham, and another in a pretty piece of Irish poplin ; both volumes are likewise adorned by the autograph of the author of *Madoc* ; they are therefore, on all accounts, to be cherished.

In associating with Southey, not only was it necessary to salvation to refrain from touching his books, but various rites, ceremonies, and usages must be rigidly observed. At certain appointed hours only was he open to conversation ; at the seasons which had been predestined from all eternity for holding intercourse with his friends. Every hour of the day had its commission—every half-hour was assigned to its own peculiar, undeviating function. The indefatigable student gave a detailed account of his most painstaking life, every moment of which was fully employed and strictly pre-arranged, to a certain literary Quaker lady.

'I rise at five throughout the year ; from six till eight I read Spanish ; then French, for one hour ; Portuguese, next, for half an hour—my watch lying on the table ; I give two hours to poetry ; I write prose for two hours ; I translate so long ; I make extracts so long' ; and so of the rest, until the poor fellow had fairly fagged himself into his bed again.

'And, pray, when dost thou think, friend?' she asked, drily, to the great discomfiture of the future Laureate.

From morn till night, from the cradle to the grave, the hard reading, hard writing pansophist had never once found a single spare moment for such a purpose. The fable, if it be a fable, is told of thee, too, dearest Bysshe. Shelley also was always reading; at his meals a book lay by his side, on the table, open. Tea and toast were often neglected, his author seldom; his mutton and potatoes might grow cold; his interest in a work never cooled. He invariably sallied forth, book in hand, reading to himself, if he was alone, if he had a companion reading aloud. He took a volume to bed with him, and read as long as his candle lasted; he then slept—impatiently, no doubt—until it was light, and he recommenced reading at the early dawn. One day we were walking together, arm-in-arm, under the gate of the Middle Temple, in Fleet Street; Shelley, with open book, was reading aloud; a man with an apron said to a brother operative, 'See, there are two of your damnation lawyers; they are always reading!' The tolerant philosopher did not choose to be reminded that he had once been taken for a lawyer; he declared the fellow was an ignorant wretch! He was loth to leave his books to go to bed, and frequently sat up late reading; sometimes indeed he remained at his studies all night. In consequence of this great watching, and of almost incessant reading, he would often fall asleep in the daytime—dropping off in a moment—like an infant. He often quietly transferred himself from his chair to the floor, and slept soundly on the carpet, and in the winter upon the rug, basking in the warmth like a cat; and like a cat his little round head was roasted before a blazing fire. If any one humanely covered the poor head to shield it from the heat, the covering was impatiently put aside in his sleep. 'You make your brains boil, Bysshe. I have seen and heard the steam rushing out violently at your nostrils and ears!'

Southey was addicted to reading his terrible epics—before they were printed—to any one, who seemed to be a fit subject for the cruel experiment. He soon set his eyes on the new comer, and one day having effected the caption of Shelley, he immediately lodged him securely in a little study upstairs, carefully locking the door upon himself and his prisoner and putting the key in his waistcoat pocket. There was a window in the room, it is true, but it was so high above the ground that Baron Trenck himself would not have attempted it.

‘ Now you shall be delighted ’, Southey said ; ‘ but sit down ’. Poor Bysshe sighed, and took his seat at the table. The author seated himself opposite, and placing his MS. on the table before him, began to read slowly and distinctly. The poem, if I mistake not, was *The Curse of Kehamah*. Charmed with his own composition the admiring author read on, varying his voice occasionally, to point out the finer passages and invite applause. There was no commendation ; no criticism ; all was hushed. This was strange. Southey raised his eyes from the neatly-written MS. ; Shelley had disappeared. This was still more strange. Escape was impossible ; every precaution had been taken, yet he had vanished. Shelley had glided noiselessly from his chair to the floor, and the insensible young Vandal lay buried in profound sleep underneath the table. No wonder the indignant and injured bard afterwards enrolled the sleeper as a member of the Satanic school, and inscribed his name, together with that of Byron, on a gibbet ! I have been told on his own authority, that wherever Southey passed the night in travelling, he bought some book, if it were possible to pick one up on a stall, or in a shop, and wrote his own name and the name of the place at the bottom of the title-page, and the date, including the day of the week. This inscription, he found, served in some measure the purpose of a journal, for when he looked at such a date it reminded him, through the association of ideas, of many particulars of his journey. I have a small volume in the German language, thus inscribed by Southey, at the foot of the title-page ; the place is some town in France.

Bysshe chanced to call, one afternoon, during his residence at Keswick, on his new acquaintance, a man eminent, and of rare epic fertility. It was at four o’clock ; Southey and his wife were sitting together at their tea after an early dinner, for it was washing day. A cup of tea was offered, which was accepted, and a plate piled high with tea-cakes was handed to the illustrious visitor ; of these he refused to partake, with signs of strong aversion. He was always abstemious in his diet, at this period, of his life peculiarly so ; a thick hunch of dry bread, possibly a slice of brown bread and butter, might have been welcome to the Spartan youth ; but hot tea-cakes heaped up, in scandalous profusion, well buttered, blushing with currants or sprinkled thickly with caraway-seeds, and reeking with allspice, shocked him grievously. It was a Persian apparatus, which he detested—a display of excessive and unmanly

luxury by which the most powerful empires have been overthrown, that threatened destruction to all social order, and would have rendered abortive even the divine Plato's scheme of a frugal and perfect republic. A poet's dinner is never a very heavy meal ; on a washing-day, we may readily believe, that it is as light as his own fancy. So far in the day Southey, no doubt, had fared sparingly ; he was a hale, healthy, hearty man, breathing the keen mountain air, and working hard, too hard, poor fellow ; he was hungry, and did not shrink from the tea-cakes which had been furnished to make up for his scanty mid-day repast. Shelley watched his unworthy proceedings, eying him with pain and pity. Southey had not noticed his distress, but he held his way, clearing the plates of buttered currant-cakes, and buttered seed-cakes, with an equal relish.

'Why ! good God, Southey !' Bysshe suddenly exclaimed, for he could no longer contain his boiling indignation. 'I am ashamed of you ! It is awful, horrible, to see such a man as you are greedily devouring this nasty stuff !'

'Nasty stuff, indeed ! How dare you call my tea-cakes nasty stuff, sir ?'

Mrs. Southey was charming, but it is credibly reported that she was also rather sharp.

'Nasty stuff ! What right have you, pray, Mr. Shelley, to come into my house, and to tell me to my face that my tea-cakes, which I made myself, are nasty ; and to blame my husband for eating them ? How in the world can they be nasty ? I washed my hands well before I made them, and I sprinkled them with flour. The board and the rolling-pin were quite clean ; they had been well scraped and sprinkled with flour. The flour was taken out of the meal-tub, which is always kept locked ; here is the key ! There was nothing nasty in the ingredients, I am sure ; we have a very good grocer in Keswick. Do you suppose, that I would put anything nasty into them ? What right have you to call them nasty ; you ought to be ashamed of yourself, and not Mr. Southey ; he surely has a right to eat what his wife puts before him ! Nasty stuff ! I like your impertinence !'

In the course of this animated invective, Bysshe put his face close to the plate, and curiously scanned the cakes. He then took up a piece and ventured to taste it, and, finding it very good, he began to eat as greedily as Southey himself. The servant, a neat, stout, little, ruddy Cumberland girl, with a very white apron, brought in a fresh supply, these also the

brother philosophers soon dispatched, eating one against the other in generous rivalry. Shelley then asked for more, but no more were to be had ; the whole batch had been consumed. The lovely Edith was pacified on seeing that her cakes were relished by the two hungry poets, and she expressed her regret that she did not know that Mr. Shelley was coming to take tea with her, or she would have made a larger provision. Harriet, who told me the tale, added : ' We were to have hot tea-cakes every evening "for ever" '. I was to make them myself, and Mrs. Southey was to teach me'.

The Divine Poet, like many other wiser men, used to pass very readily and suddenly from one extreme to the other. I myself witnessed, some years later, a like rapid transition. When he resided at Bishopsgate, I usually walked down from London, and spent Sunday with him. One frosty Saturday, in the middle of the winter, being overcome by hunger, I halted by the way—it was a rare occurrence—for refreshment, at a humble inn on Hounslow Heath. I had just taken my seat on a Windsor chair, at a small round beechen table in a little dark room with a well-sanded floor, when I saw Bysshe striding past the window. He was coming to meet me ; I went to the door, and hailed him.

' Come along ! It is dusk ; tea will be ready ; we shall be late ! '

' No ! I must have something to eat first ; come in ! '

He walked about the room impatiently.

' When will your dinner be ready ; what have you ordered ? '

' I asked for eggs and bacon, but they have no eggs ; I am to have some fried bacon '.

He was struck with horror, and his agony was increased at the appearance of my dinner. Bacon was proscribed by him ; it was gross and abominable. It distressed him greatly at first to see me eat the bacon ; but he gradually approached the dish, and, studying the bacon attentively, said, ' So this is bacon ! ' He then ate a small piece. ' It is not so bad either ! ' More was ordered ; he devoured it voraciously.

' Bring more bacon ! ' It was brought, and eaten.

' Let us have another plate '.

' I am very sorry, gentlemen ', said the old woman, ' but indeed I have no more in the house '.

The Poet was angry at the disappointment, and rated her.

' What business has a woman to keep an inn, who has not

enough bacon in the house for her guests ? She ought to be killed !'

'Really, gentlemen, I am very sorry to be out of bacon ; but I only keep by me as much as I think will be wanted. I can easily get more from Staines ; they have very good bacon always in Staines !'

'As there is nothing more to be had, come along, Bysshe ; let us go home to tea !'

'No ! Not yet ; she is going to Staines, to get us some more bacon'.

'She cannot go to-night ; come along !'

He departed with reluctance, grumbling as we walked homewards at the scanty store of bacon, lately condemned as gross and abominable. The dainty rustic food made a strong impression upon his lively fancy, for when we arrived the first words he uttered were, 'We have been eating bacon together on Hounslow Heath, and do you know it was very nice. Cannot we have bacon here, Mary ?'

'Yes, you can, if you please ; but not to-night. Here is your tea ; take that !'

'I had rather have some more bacon !' sighed the Poet.

Shelley's family always called him Bysshe ; as many of them, as now survive, whenever they speak of their bereavement—of the bright, but lost star of their honourable house—still call him so. Harriet and her sister, chiefly the latter, soon interdicted that name, which Eliza affirmed was too shocking ; and they substituted Percy, as being prettier and more romantic. It may be so, but it was less peculiar ; and I continued to address my friend as Bysshe, whenever I could style him thus without flagrant offence and open scandal. There is a Percy in Chevy Chase ; a Percy in Shakspeare ; there is many a Percy to be found elsewhere ; good men and true ; it is a very good name, no doubt ; but I never knew any other Bysshe ; there is an individuality in that name which pleases me. His grandfather, old Sir Bysshe, after whom he was called, and who probably was his godfather, I never saw ; by general consent it was admitted that he was tall, handsome, clever, and eccentric ; of a noble presence and good address, and with the formal politeness of a gentleman of the old school.

Sir Bysshe Shelley was born in 1731 ; he was a younger branch of his family, and therefore not wealthy. I have heard various tales concerning him, some of them extraordinary ; these, it would seem, are partly true, and partly false, as is

commonly the case with all private histories ; but none of them are entirely unfounded. I have heard, for example, that he was at one time a miller. The legend has been thus explained. He was always frugal, and he saved his money early in life ; he had invested his first savings on the security of a mill, and the mortgage being foreclosed, he became the owner of the mill ; so far, but not farther, he was a miller. He married a rich heiress, when he was only twenty-one years of age, in 1752, the only daughter of the Rev. Theobald Mitchell. This lady was the mother of Timothy Shelley, and the grandmother of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Some seventeen years afterwards he found another and a richer heiress, whom he married in 1769 ; of his second marriage it would be superfluous to say more at present.

His personal habits were economical, even penurious, and he had married two rich wives ; it is not surprising, therefore, that at the termination of a long life of eighty-four years, he had amassed a considerable sum of money, and died at the commencement of the year 1815 very rich. Nevertheless he had spent money, it is said, at elections ; and it is certain that he had lavished large sums very foolishly in building a vast edifice, Castle Goring, which he never completed. The whimsical and parsimonious old gentleman was created a Baronet in 1806. His habits were retired and peculiar, but little known ; for many years before his death he was confined by ill health, or chose to confine himself, to his room in a small house in the town of Horsham, and to the society of an old servant, who was as great a curiosity as his master ; as the fine, handsome man, of polished and elegant manners, of great natural talents, and of vast wealth, who by his own caprice was thus buried alive

I have heard that at one time Sir Bysshe actually practised medicine in London, in partnership with Dr. Graham, who was formerly notorious for his earth-baths and celestial beds. This tale is apocryphal ; but Bysshe, his grandson and namesake, assured me that he had heard from good authority that his grandfather lent money to the doctor, with whom he was acquainted, in order to set up a purple chariot, in which the renowned physician drove about town ; and to carry on other professional objects. When I was a boy, people still talked about Dr. Graham ; I remember hearing a clergyman, a middle-aged man, give a detailed account of him to ladies and gentlemen assembled in the drawing-room at home :

'My uncle, an old clergyman, had lived many years in a damp parsonage in the New Forest, and he was sorely afflicted with rheumatism. He was advised to consult Dr. Graham, who was then all the fashion. He did so, and was persuaded by him to take an earth-bath : he actually took one, and he thought it did him good, and was likely to be of great service. My uncle often regretted that he had not resolution enough to persevere ; but it was exceedingly unpleasant. The patient was led into the doctor's garden, there he took off his clothes behind a screen, stripping himself stark naked. He was then placed in a hole in the ground, just large enough to contain him ; in what posture, I do not recollect, but I think standing. Earth, finely sifted vegetable mould, was gently filled in quite up to the collar bone, the head and neck being free, and remaining out of the ground ; the arms were buried, being placed close to his side. The patient being fairly in the bath, the screen was removed, and he commonly saw other persons around him in a like situation with himself ; and he passed the time, as well as he could, in conversing with them ; for it was necessary to remain three or four hours in the earth'.

'How cold he must have been !' a lady remarked.

'On the contrary, the sensation of heat was most oppressive ; there was an unpleasant feeling of suffocation, and the perspiration was profuse. When the time prescribed had expired, the screen was placed round him, the bather was taken out of his grave and well rubbed, and he was allowed to put on his clothes and to depart. It was so disagreeable, that my uncle could never summon courage to undergo the operation a second time ; but several of his friends had taken an earth-bath frequently, and they thought that the process was of great use to them'.

'I have seen persons in the earth-bath myself. I well remember going with my uncle the first time he consulted Dr. Graham. A man servant, in a splendid livery, received us, and conducted us into the garden, and we saw there what seemed to be a bed of cauliflowers. It was the age of wigs, of powdered wigs ; and there were several old gentlemen buried up to the neck in the ground, with the head only to be seen above the earth, and a well whitened wig upon it. The footman led my uncle up to one of the most considerable of the wigs, and introduced him to his physician : " This, sir, is Dr. Graham ". For the doctor took a bath every morning himself, to encourage his patients, and shone forth on the surface of

mother earth as the biggest of the big wigs. He could not feel my uncle's pulse, for his arms were interred as well as his body ; but he looked at his tongue, and asked him very many questions, in exact accordance with the practice of the College ; and finally he prescribed an earth-bath, which shortly afterwards my uncle took '.

'How dreadful !' all the ladies exclaimed with one voice ; 'it must be just like being buried alive ! Were there any women there ?'

'Not when I was present, certainly ; and I rather think that females did not take these baths ; and yet I recollect that the advertisements strongly recommended them to ladies as an unfailing remedy for sterility, inasmuch as the earth would surely impart to them some portion of its fruitfulness, the earth being the fertile mother of all things'.

'Did you ever see Dr. Graham's celestial bed ?' my father asked.

'Never ! I never saw it. That was sometime afterwards. The Doctor quite lost himself eventually. My uncle knew nothing of him then ; we were obliged to drop his acquaintance !'

Whatever a celestial bed might be, an earth-bath must unquestionably be a most unpleasant remedy : the resurrection, the taking up the body and removing the earth, however managed, must be disagreeable, and even perilous. It is not easy to take up a large and vigorous plant without injury—without breaking its roots ; but to dig up a portly, ponderous parson, must be a process in medical horticulture requiring extreme nicety of manipulation, lest unhappily a sharp spade should cut off unawares some portion of his radical fibres. No wonder 'My Uncle', his rheumatism notwithstanding, so soon had enough of it !

What security Sir Bysshe had to cover his advances to Dr. Graham, I was never informed. The celestial bed could hardly be a subject for mortgage and foreclosure ; however, the bathing-place might be a real security.

The descendant Bysshe used to speak of his ancestor, Sir Bysshe, without love and without hate ; with contemptuous indifference. Nevertheless, a certain indistinct sympathy might be traced as actually existing between natures so opposite and antagonistic, and arising out of a strong common feeling. Bysshe disliked his father, and Sir Bysshe disliked his son ; according to the profound observation of Lord Bacon,

that every grandfather loves his grandson because he is his enemy's enemy, the basis of a treaty of mutual alliance already existed. Had this favourable disposition been cultivated, it would probably have borne fruit ; but the poor poet could never cultivate any soil less ungrateful than the two arid summits of the most sterile mountain on earth—Parnassus.

The Baronet grandfather received the rare visits of his philosophic grandchild with politeness ; kindness he had none ; he conversed with him civilly, heard whatever was addressed to him with urbanity, was never shocked or offended at any proposition, be it what it might ; never swore at him—his son he cursed bitterly ; he thanked him for his compahy, and hoped to see him again soon.

For speculative opinions the old gentleman cared as much as his old cat did ; neither of them was ever offended at any sally, however bold : the toleration of Sir Bysshe was perfect, and very commendable ; his indifference to everything, even to human progress and perfectibility, was most reprehensible :

'They may found Plato's Republic as soon as they please, at Reigate, at Cuckfield, or even at Horsham ; I have no objection to it whatever ; but I would not take my leg off this stool, either to promote, or to prevent it'.

'Men may believe what they will', thought the cat, 'but be human belief what it may, it will never bring another mouse into our house, or make the mice which are here already more easy to be caught'.

To return to Elizabeth and the Exiles of Siberia ; to Eliza and the exiles, who for poetical, not political offences, had voluntarily banished themselves to the ungenial climate of Keswick. Madame Cottin has not made them the subject of a moral tale, and they kept but few records, or reports, of their proceedings ; little, therefore, can be told of them.

An extract from a letter written by Coleridge affirms, and no doubt truly, that the writer, had he fortunately been at Keswick when Shelley visited it, would have treated him less like a prig than Southey did ; it is, moreover, in spirit candid, tolerant, and judicious :

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER OF COLERIDGE

'I think as highly of Shelley's genius—yea, and of his *heart*—as you can do. Soon after he left Oxford, he went to the Lakes, poor fellow ! and with some wish, I have understood,

to see me ; but I was absent, and Southey received him instead. Now—the very reverse of what would have been the case in ninety-nine instances of a hundred—I *might* have been of use to him, and Southey could not ; for I should have sympathized with his poetics, metaphysical reveries, and the very word metaphysics is an abomination to Southey, and Shelley would have felt that I understood him. His discussions—tending towards Atheism of a certain sort—would not have scared *me* ; for *me* it would have been a semi-transparent Larva, soon to be sloughed, and through which I should have seen the true *image*—the final metamorphosis. Besides, I have ever thought that sort of Atheism the next best religion to Christianity ; nor does the better faith I have learnt from Paul and John interfere with the cordial reverence I feel for Benedict Spinoza. As far as Robert Southey was concerned with him, I am quite certain that his harshness arose entirely from the frightful reports that had been made to him respecting Shelley's moral character and conduct—reports essentially false ; but, for a man of Southey's strict regularity and habitual self-government, rendered plausible by Shelley's own wild words, and horror of hypocrisy.'

CHAPTER XV

SHELLEY was fugitive, volatile ; he evaporated like ether, his nature being ethereal ; he suddenly escaped, like some fragrant essence ; evanescent as a quintessence. He was a lovely, a graceful image, but fading, vanishing speedily from our sight, being portrayed in flying colours. He was a climber, a creeper, an elegant, beautiful, odoriferous parasitical plant ; he could not support himself ; he must be tied up fast to something of a firmer texture, harder and more rigid than his own, pliant, yielding structure ; to some person of a less flexible formation : he always required a prop. In order to write the history of his fragile, unconnected, interrupted life, it is necessary to describe that of some ordinary every-day person with whom he was familiar, and to introduce the real subject of the history, whenever a transitory glimpse of him can be caught.

In exhibiting a phantasmagoria, a magic lantern, a spectrum of prismatic colours, a solar microscope ; the white sheet, the

screen of blank paper, the whitened wall claim no merit, no share in the beauty of the exhibition, yet are these indispensable adjuncts in order to display wonderful, beautiful, or striking phenomena.

It is not easy—it is often impossible, indeed—to relate the whole life of any one without entering into various details ; in themselves, these are often unimportant, but they are required as a background to bring out the principal figure in proper relief.

In the dedication of the fragment of his *Essay on Friendship*, he says : ' I once had a friend, whom an inextricable multitude of circumstances has forced me to treat with apparent neglect '.

The celebrated Cretan Maze, to which by the word ' inextricable ' he plainly alludes, as his friend can testify, was a labyrinth of which he was himself the architect, the Dædalus ; and his poetic imagination alone created the Minotaur, the fancied monster that inhabited it, and exacted a cruel tribute. The inextricable, inexplicable, irremediable, unobservable error, in the real existence of which he with a rash credulity believed, was entirely of his own making, or imagining. Clotho span the thread of life for the Divine Poet precisely as she spins it for other and less gifted mortals ; but he so wound the skein, and weakly permitted others so to wind it for him, that it soon became, as he supposed, ' inextricable ' ; although when it was most tangled it would have been easy, with a little firmness, to have cut at once every knot. It would have been, indeed, no difficult task, with a moderate amount of patience and ordinary address, to have unravelled the intricacies caused solely by the perverse machinations and fraudulent ingenuity of sordid and selfish people.

The primary object, great final cause, and last and most important result of the poetical faculty and temperament is certainly to make, to create ; but the incidental consequences are also to destroy : a poet is a maker, but he is likewise a marrer. I have often wondered and asked myself and others, and amongst the rest my friend, as I stated before, how many poets the world could bear at once, all simultaneously energizing destructively ?

This question, however, can never arise in practice ; for, fortunately or unfortunately, the number of poets has always been very limited : a real poet is of rare occurrence.

Having wasted much money on the bootless expedition to London, and on an expensive journey by post to Cumberland,

as much as would have maintained them all in comfort for some months at York, the unfortunate exiles found themselves without resources, and were in great straits, in a land of strangers—of persons less improvident, perhaps, but not less needy, than they were. It was no longer in my power to assist my friend; a loan of twenty pounds, or thirty pounds, will enable a single man to hold his way for some time, but to the master of a family such paltry help avails little: it is a drop in a bucket.

A retired naval captain, however gallant, generous, and good-natured he may be, is seldom a wealthy man. Bysshe had exhausted the bounty and the benevolence of his uncle, who could inclose no more bank-post bills in his kind, jovial letters. These, no doubt, were as genial as ever; but all the hero of many battles, of many sea-fights, could now do for his high-spirited and studious nephew was to advise him to live in as economical a manner as possible. Excellent advice, and worthy of honour and acceptance; but it is impracticable, even for an inspired poet, and such unquestionably he was, to subsist upon air—upon the pure, keen, searching air of the mountains.

Various attempts were made to procure the requisite supplies, but in vain. At last, the father of his wife gave him grudgingly a small sum. It was unworthy of a Christian, or a Jew, to refuse at least some small pittance, for present and most urgent necessities, to a married daughter, whose filial disobedience had elevated her from a coffee-house to Castle Goring. Besides, his model daughter, Eliza, had never offended him by any like act of prosperous undutifulness; she unquestionably had never forfeited her hereditary right to a moderate pension.

The accursed thirst of gold defeats its darling objects, even in the breast of a greedy vintner, of a *perfidus caupo*. This sparing, but seasonable aid, enabled them to remain at Keswick; the dates of letters show that they resided there about three months, from the middle of November, 1811, to the middle of the following February.

The campaign of the year 1812, as well as the year itself, was opened by a spirited attack upon the intrenchments of a veteran philosopher. Shelley boldly assailed no less a chief than the venerable William Godwin, whose acquaintance he was determined to make without further delay, and whom accordingly he addressed by letter, without introduction, as

he was wont to do in cases of great literary emergency. Bysshe's four letters to the author of *Political Justice* comprehend whatever is now known of this period of his life, and they will be read with deep interest; but the contents must be received with caution, and with a certain distrust; for, together with much truth, they contain some fiction: some flights of imagination, some strains of poetry, have here and there thrown a false light upon a solid structure of facts. It is much to be regretted, that, after the most careful and diligent research through all our repositories, we have not yet been able to find the calm answers of the old philosopher to the fervid epistles of the youthful poet. But perseverance frequently ensures success, and often renewed researches are now and then rewarded by fresh discoveries; all that has been mislaid is not lost; and we may still cherish the hope that another edition of Shelley's life may present, together with other desired documents, William Godwin's earliest letters to his illustrious correspondent. Slight traces of thought, scattered rays of light, which gleam faintly at intervals, as it were, through crevices and interstices in the young man's letters, strongly stimulate a liberal and enlightened curiosity to long for the perusal of the missing papers.

KESWICK, CUMBERLAND, *January 3, 1812.*

YOU will be surprised at hearing from a stranger. No introduction has, nor in all probability ever will authorize that which common thinkers would call a liberty; it is, however, a liberty which, although not sanctioned by custom, is so far from being reprobated by reason, that the dearest interests of mankind imperiously demand that a certain etiquette of fashion should no longer keep 'man at a distance from man', or impose its flimsy fancies between the free communication of intellect.

The name of Godwin has been used, to excite in me feelings of reverence and admiration. I have been accustomed to consider him a luminary too dazzling for the darkness which surrounds him. From the earliest period of my knowledge of his principles, I have ardently desired to share, on the footing of intimacy, that intellect which I have delighted to contemplate in its emanations.

Considering, then, these feelings, you will not be surprised at the inconceivable emotions with which I learned your existence and your dwelling. I had enrolled your name in

the list of the honourable dead. I had felt regret that the glory of your being had passed from this earth of ours. It is not so; you still live, and, I firmly believe, are still planning the welfare of human kind.

I have but just entered on the scene of human operations; yet my feelings and my reasonings correspond with what yours were. My course has been short, but eventful. I have seen much of human prejudice, suffered much from human persecution, yet I see no reason hence inferrible which should alter my wishes for their renovation. The ill-treatment I have met with has more than ever impressed the truth of my principles on my judgment. I am young. I am ardent in the cause of philanthropy and truth; do not suppose that this is vanity; I am not conscious that it influences this portraiture. I imagine myself dispassionately describing the state of my mind. I am young; you have gone before me—I doubt not, are a veteran to me in the years of persecution. Is it strange that, defying prejudice as I have done, I should outstep the limits of custom's prescription, and endeavour to make my desire useful by a friendship with William Godwin?

I pray you to answer this letter. Imperfect as may be my capacity, my desire is ardent and unintermitted. Half an hour would be at least humanely employed in the experiment. I may mistake your residence; certain feelings, of which I may be an inadequate arbiter, may induce you to desire concealment; I may not, in fine, have an answer to this letter. If I do not, when I come to London, I shall seek for you. I am convinced I could represent myself to you in such terms as not to be thought wholly unworthy of your friendship; at least, if desire for universal happiness has any claim upon your preference, that desire I can exhibit. Adieu! I shall earnestly await your answer.

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, at M. J. Godwin's,
Juvenile Library, Skinner Street, London.

KESWICK, *January 10, 1812.*

SIR,

It is not otherwise to be supposed than that I should appreciate your avocations far beyond the pleasure or benefit which can accrue to me from their sacrifice. The time, however, will be small which may be mis-spent in reading this letter; and much individual pleasure as an answer might give

me, I have not the vanity to imagine that it will be greater than the happiness elsewhere diffused during the time which its creation will occupy.

You complain that the generalizing character of my letter renders it deficient in interest ; that I am not an individual to you. Yet, intimate as I am with your character and your writings, intimacy with *yourself* must in some degree precede this exposure of my peculiarities. It is scarcely possible, however pure be the morality which he has endeavoured to diffuse, but that generalization must characterize the uninvited address of a stranger to a stranger.

I proceed to remedy the fault. I am the son of a man of fortune in Sussex. The habits of thinking of my father and myself never coincided. Passive obedience was inculcated and enforced in my childhood. I was required to love, because it was *my duty* to love : it is scarcely necessary to remark, that coercion obviated its own intention. I was haunted with a passion for the wildest and most extravagant romances. Ancient books of Chemistry and Magic were perused with an enthusiasm of wonder, almost amounting to belief. My sentiments were unrestrained by anything within me ; external impediments were numerous, and strongly applied ; their effect was merely temporary.

From a reader, I became a writer of romances ; before the age of seventeen I had published two, *St. Irvyn* and *Zastrozzi*, each of which, though quite uncharacteristic of me as now I am, yet serves to mark the state of my mind at the period of their composition. I shall desire them to be sent to you : do not, however, consider this as any obligation to yourself to misapply your valuable time.

It is now a period of more than two years since first I saw your inestimable book on *Political Justice* ; it opened to my mind fresh and more extensive views ; it materially influenced my character, and I rose from its perusal a wiser and a better man. I was no longer the votary of romance ; till then I had existed in an ideal world—now I found that in this universe of ours was enough to excite the interest of the heart, enough to employ the discussions of reason ; I beheld, in short, that I had duties to perform. Conceive the effect which the *Political Justice* would have upon a mind before jealous of its independence, participating somewhat singularly in a peculiar susceptibility.

My age is now *nineteen* ; at the period to which I allude I

was at Eton. No sooner had I formed the principles which I now profess, than I was anxious to disseminate their benefits. This was done without the slightest caution. I was twice expelled, but recalled by the interference of my father. I went to Oxford. Oxonian society was insipid to me, uncongenial with my habits of thinking. I could not descend to common life: the sublime interest of poetry, lofty and exalted achievements, the proselytism of the world, the equalization of its inhabitants, were to me the soul of my soul. You can probably form some idea of the contrast exhibited to my character by those with whom I was surrounded. Classical reading and poetical writing employed me during my residence at Oxford.

In the meantime I became, in the popular sense of the word, a sceptic. I printed a pamphlet, avowing my opinion, and its occasion. I distributed this anonymously to men of thought and learning, wishing that Reason should decide on the case at issue: it was never my intention to deny it. Mr. —, at Oxford, among others, had the pamphlet; he showed it to the Master and the Fellows of University College, and I was sent for. I was informed, that in case I denied the publication, no more would be said. I refused, and was expelled.

It will be necessary, in order to elucidate this part of my history, to inform you, that I am heir by entail to an estate of £6,000 per annum. My principles have induced me to regard the law of primogeniture as an evil of primary magnitude. My father's notions of family honour are incoincident with my knowledge of public good. I will never sacrifice the latter to any consideration. My father has ever regarded me as a blot, a defilement of his honour. He wished to induce me by poverty to accept of some commission in a distant regiment, and in the interim of my absence to prosecute the pamphlet, that a process of outlawry might make the estate, on his death, devolve to my younger brother. These are the leading points of the history of the man before you. Others exist, but I have thought proper to make some selection, not that it is my design to conceal or extenuate any part, but that I should by their enumeration quite outstep the bounds of modesty. Now, it is for you to judge whether, by permitting me to cultivate your friendship, you are exhibiting yourself more really useful than by the pursuance of those avocations, of which the time spent in allowing this cultivation would deprive you. I am now earnestly pursuing studious habits.

I am writing 'An inquiry into the causes of the failure of the French Revolution to benefit mankind'. My plan is that of resolving to lose no opportunity to disseminate truth and happiness.

I am married to a woman whose views are similar to my own. To you, as the regulator and former of my mind, I must ever look with real respect and veneration.

Yours sincerely,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

KESWICK, *Jan.* 16, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

That so prompt and so kind an answer should have relieved my mind I had scarcely dared to hope; to find that he—who as an author had gained my love and confidence, whose views and habits I had delighted to conjecture from his works, whose principles I had adopted, and every trace of whose existence is now made sacred, and I hope, eternally so, by associations, which throw the charm of feeling over the deductions of reason—that he, as a man, should be my friend and my adviser, the moderator of my enthusiasm, the personal exciter and strengthener of my virtuous habits: all this was more than I dared to trust myself to hope, and which now comes to me almost like a ray of second existence.

Without the deceit of self-flattery, which might lead me to think that my intellectual powers demanded your time, those circumstances, which arbitrarily—or, as may be said, fortuitously—place me in a situation capable hereafter of considerably influencing the actions of others, induce me to think that I shall not 'in publica commoda peccem, si longo sermone morer tua tempora'.

I know not how to describe the pleasure which your last letter has given me; that William Godwin should have a 'deep and earnest interest in my welfare', cannot but produce the most intoxicating sensations. It may be my vanity which is thus flattered, but I am much deceived in myself, if love and respect for the great and worthy form not a very considerable part of my feelings.

I cannot help considering you as a friend and adviser, whom I have known very long; this circumstance must generate a degree of familiarity, which will cease to appear surprising to you, when the intimacy, which I had acquired with your

writings, so much preceded the information which led to my first letter. It may be said, that I have derived little benefit or injury from artificial education. I have known no tutor or adviser (*not excepting my father*) from whose lessons and suggestions I have not recoiled with disgust.

The knowledge which I have, whatever it may be (putting out of the question the age of the grammar and the horn-book), has been acquired by my unassisted efforts. I have before given you a slight sketch of my earlier habits and feelings—my present are, in my own opinion, infinitely superior—they are elevated and disinterested; such as they are, you have principally produced them.

With what delight, what cheerfulness, what goodwill, may it be conceived, that I constitute myself the pupil of him, under whose actual guidance my very thoughts have hitherto been arranged.

You mistake me, if you think that I am angry with my father. I have ever been desirous of a reconciliation with him, but the price which he demands for it is a renunciation of my opinions, or, at least, a subjection to conditions which should bind me to act in opposition to their very spirit. It is probable that my father has *acted* for my welfare, but the manner in which he has done so will not allow me to suppose that he has *felt* for it, unconnectedly with certain considerations of birth; and feeling for these things was not feeling for me. I never loved my father—it was not from hardness of heart, for I have loved and do love warmly. You say, 'Being yet a scholar, I ought to have no intolerable itch to become a teacher'. I have not, so far as any publications of mine are irreconcilable with the general good, or so far as they are negative. I do not set up for a judge of controversies, but into whatever company I go, I have introduced my own sentiments, partly with a view, if they were anywise erroneous, that unforeseen elucidations might rectify them; or, if they were not, that I should contribute my mite to the treasury of wisdom and happiness.

I hope, in the course of our communication, to acquire that sobriety of spirit which is the characteristic of true heroism.

I have not heard, without benefit, that Newton was a modest man; I am not ignorant that vanity and folly delight in forwardness and assumption. But I think there is a line to be drawn between affectation of unpossessed talents and the deceit of self-distrust, by which much power has been lost to the world; for

Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

This line may be called 'the modesty of nature'. I hope I am somewhat anxious not to overstep its boundaries. I will not again crudely obtrude my peculiar opinions or my doubts on the world. But could I not, at the same time, improve my own powers, and diffuse true and virtuous principles? Many, with equally confined talents to my own, are by publications scattering the seeds of prejudice and selfishness. Might not an exhibition of truth, with equal elegance and depth, suffice to counteract the deleterious tendency of their principles? Does not writing hold the next place to colloquial discussion in eliciting and classing the powers of the mind? I am willing to become a scholar—nay, a pupil. My humility and confidence, where I am conscious that I am not imposed upon, and where I perceive talents and powers so certainly and undoubtedly superior, are unfeigned and complete. I have desired the publications of my early youth to be sent to you. You will perceive that *Zastrozzi* and *St. Irvyn* were written prior to my acquaintance with your writings—the *Essay on Love*, a little poem—since. I had, indeed, read *St. Leon* before I wrote *St. Irvyn*; but the reasonings had then made little impression.

In a few days we set off to Dublin. I do not know exactly when, but a letter addressed to Keswick will find me. Our journey has been settled some time. We go principally to *forward as much as we can* the Catholic Emancipation.

Southey, the poet, whose principles were pure and elevated, once, is now the paid champion of every abuse and absurdity. I have had much conversation with him. He says, 'You will think as I do when you are as old'. I do not feel the least disposition to be Mr. S.'s proselyte.

In the summer we shall be in the north of Wales. Dare I hope that you will come to see us? Perhaps this would be an unfeasible neglect of your avocations. I shall hope it until you forbid me.

I remain, with the greatest respect,
Your most sincere and devoted,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

KESWICK, CUMBERLAND, *January 28, 1812.*

MY DEAR SIR,

Your letter has reached me on the eve of our departure

for Dublin. I cannot deny myself the pleasure of answering it, although we shall probably have reached Ireland before an answer to this can arrive. You do us a great and essential service by the enclosed introduction to Mr. Curran ; he is a man whose public character I have admired and respected. You offer an additional motive for hastening our journey. I have not long been married. My wife is the partner of my thoughts and feelings. My state at the period of our first knowledge of each other was isolated and friendless ; hers was embittered by family disagreements and a system of domestic oppressions. We agreed to unite our fates, and the reasons that operated to induce our submission to the ceremonies of the Church were the many advantages of benefiting society which the despotism of custom would cut us off from in case of our nonconformity. My peculiar reasons were considerations of the unequally weighty burden of disgrace and hatred which a resistance to this system would entail upon my companion. A man, in such a case, is a man of gallantry and spirit—a woman loses all claim to respect and politeness. She has lost modesty, which is the female criterion of virtue, and those, whose virtues extend no farther than modesty, regard her with hatred and contempt.

You regard early authorship detrimental to the cause of general happiness. I confess this has not been my opinion, even when I have bestowed deep, and, I hope, disinterested thought upon the subject.

If any man would determine, sincerely and cautiously, at every period of his life, to publish books which should contain the real state of his feelings and opinions, I am willing to suppose that this portraiture of his mind would be worth many metaphysical disquisitions ; and one, whose mind is strongly imbued with an ardent desire of communicating pleasurable sensations, is of all others the least likely to publish any feelings or opinions, but such as should excite the reader to discipline in some sort his mind into the same state as that of the writer.

With these sentiments, I have been preparing an address to the Catholics of Ireland, which, however deficient may be its execution, I can by no means admit that it contains one sentiment which *can* harm the cause of liberty and happiness. It consists of the benevolent and tolerant deductions of philosophy reduced into the simplest language, and such as those who by their uneducated poverty are most susceptible of evil

impressions from Catholicism may clearly comprehend. I know it can do no harm ; it cannot excite rebellion, as its main principle is to trust the success of a cause to the energy of its truth. It cannot ' widen the breach between the kingdoms ', as it attempts to convey to the vulgar mind sentiments of universal philanthropy, and whatever impressions it may produce, they can be no others but those of peace and harmony ; it owns no religion but benevolence, no cause but virtue, no party but the world. I shall devote myself with unremitting zeal, as far as an uncertain state of health will permit, towards forwarding the great ends of virtue and happiness in Ireland, regarding as I do the present state of that country's affairs as an opportunity which, if I, being thus disengaged, permit to pass unoccupied, I am unworthy of the character which I have assumed. Enough of Ireland !

I anticipated in my own mind your sentiments on the remark which you quoted from my last letter concerning my father. I am not a stranger to the immense complexity of human feelings, but when I find generosity so exceedingly outweighed in any one's conduct by the contrary and less extended principle, then I despair of good fruits, seeing marks of barrenness. I have a great wish of adding to my father's happiness, because the filial connection seems to render it, as it were, more particularly in my power ; but it is impossible. A little time since, he sent to me a letter, through his attorney, renewing an allowance of two hundred pounds per annum, but with this remark, ' that his sole reason for so doing was to prevent my cheating strangers '. The insult contained in these words, as applied to me, excites no feelings of repulsion or hatred towards him, but it makes me despair of conciliation when I see how rooted is his prejudice against me.

I find myself near the end of my paper. My egotism appears inexhaustible. My relation of pupilage with regard to you in a manner excuses this apparent vanity. I wish to put you in possession of as much of my thoughts and feelings as I know myself. I shall regard as a most inestimable blessing my happy audacity in casting aside the trammels of custom, and drinking the streams of your mind at their fountain-head.

I will say no more of Wales at present. We have determined, next summer, to receive a most dear friend, of whom I shall speak hereafter, in some romantic spot. Perhaps I shall be able to prevail on you and your wife and children to leave the tumult and dust of London for a while. However

that may be, I shall certainly see you in London. I am not yet of age. At that time, I have great hopes of being enabled to offer you a house of my own. Philanthropy is confined to no spot.—Adieu !

Direct your next—' Post-office, Dublin '.

My wife sends her respects.

Believe me, in all sincerity of heart, yours truly, sincerely,
P. B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

CHAPTER XVI

SHELLEY'S letters to William Godwin must be received with caution ; the young poet saw events through the spectacles of his pregnant and prurient fancy, and not as they really were.

He was altogether incapable of rendering an account of any transaction whatsoever, according to the strict and precise truth, and the bare, naked realities of actual life ; not through an addiction to falsehood, which he cordially detested, but because he was the creature, the unsuspecting and unresisting victim, of his irresistible imagination.

Had he written to ten different individuals the history of some proceeding in which he was himself a party, and an eye-witness, each of his ten reports would have varied from the rest in essential and important circumstances. The relation given on the morrow would be unlike that of the day, as the latter would contradict the tale of yesterday. Take some examples. He writes :

' I was informed at Oxford, that in case I denied the publication, no more would be said. I refused, and was expelled.'

This is incorrect ; no such offer was made, no such information was given ; but musing on the affair, as he was wont, he dreamed that the proposal had been declined by him and thus he had the gratification of believing, that he was more of a martyr than he really was. Again he writes thus :

' At the period to which I allude, I was at Eton. No sooner had I formed the principles, which I now profess, than I was anxious to disseminate their benefits. This was done without the slightest caution. I was twice expelled, but recalled by the interference of my father '.

All this is purely imaginary : he never published anything

controversial at Eton ; he was never expelled ; not twice, not once. His poetic temperament was overpowered by the grandeur and awfulness of the occasion, when he took up his pen to address the author of *Caleb Williams*, so that the auspicious Apollo, to relieve and support his favourite son, shed over his head a benign vision. He saw himself at his Dame's with *Political Justice*, which he had lately borrowed from Dr. Lind, open before him. He had read a few pages and had formed his principles in a moment ; he was thrown into a rapture by the truisms, mares'-nests, and paradoxes, which he had met with.

He sees himself in the printing-loft of ' J. Pote, bibliopola et typographus ', amongst Eton grammars and Eton school-books, republishing with the rapidity of a dream, and ' without the slightest caution ', Godwin's heavy and unsaleable volumes. He sees himself before the Dons convened and expelled ; and, lastly, he beholds the Honourable Member for Shoreham weeping on his knees, like Priam at the feet of Achilles, and imploring the less inexorable Dr. Keate.

All this, being poetically true, he firmly and loyally believes, and communicates, as being true in act, fact, and deed, to his venerable correspondent. One more instance, and that is still more extraordinary ; he says :

' My father wished to induce me, by poverty, to accept of some commission in a distant regiment, in the interim of my absence to prosecute the pamphlet, that a process of outlawry might make the estate on his death devolve to my younger brother '.

No offer of a commission in the army was ever made to Bysshe ; it is only in a dream, that the prosecution, outlawry, and devolution of the estate could find a place. The narration of such proceedings would have been too strong and too strange for a German romance ; it would have been too large a requisition upon the reader's credulity to ask him to credit them in the father of Zastrozzi, or of St. Irvyn ; or even in the unnatural parent of Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew. Certain other complaints concerning his father's conduct are unintentionally exaggerated, or arise from misconception.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable, that he ought to have made his eldest son and heir a fixed, moderate and competent allowance, and to have left him to the full enjoyment of his opinions, or rather, to be more exact, to the free indulgence of his insatiable appetite for discussion.

‘ You know more than any other person of your friend Shelley ; pray tell me, what were his real opinions ? ’

This question has often been addressed to me, and I have as often, at least when the inquirer was a person worthy of a serious answer, resolved it truly and fairly ; but, I fear, seldom in a manner quite satisfactory to him who asked me, by reason of the inherent difficulty and complexity of the subject. Marsilius Ficinus, it is believed, was better read in Plato than any other man ever was, at least in modern times. He has been duly evoked from the dead, and is in attendance, by virtue of a writ of subpoena ; his expenses having been tendered to him, to submit himself to an examination. The distinguished Platonist is asked, ‘ What were the real opinions of Socrates, as they are expressed in Plato’s Dialogues ? ’

What answer can the dead witness give ? Socrates was the opponent, at least wherever he could hope to meet with a respondent, of every thesis that was propounded to him. In like manner Shelley’s real opinions were always those which were not held by any companion at all likely to dispute with him. His confession of faith was made in this fashion. I am a Republican ; a pure republic is an impossibility ; what you mean by a republic is in truth an aristocracy. I am an aristocrat : all men are naturally equal ; how then can one man be better than another ? I believe in revealed religion : there cannot be a revelation, it is absolutely impracticable. I hold by natural religion : no religion can be of nature, by revelation it may exist. The soul is immortal : you cannot prove that it is. Death is total annihilation : all the intellectual phenomena contradict the hypothesis of annihilation ; it is untenable. What then were the real opinions of my highly gifted friend ? Tell me, I pray you, my gentle readers ; he never told me ! Had Bysshe been left to himself, and been permitted, without disturbance from without, to follow his own inclinations, the burning, feverish, inextinguishable thirst for metaphysical speculation would have abated. He would have grown gradually weary of arguments and disquisitions ; and, in fact, he did eventually become tired of them, and he left them off in great measure, having learned, perhaps, to dogmatize a little instead, partly out of his own head, and partly from the writings of Plato, and of other ancient philosophers. The opposition, intolerance, and sometimes also persecution, which he suffered, served only to prolong the period of his addiction to the vain attempt to elicit the truth,

and this he long and sincerely believed was to be effected by written and verbal argumentations.

His course of proceeding, even when he was most inclined to doubt and discuss, always appeared to judicious persons perfectly harmless. Nobody listened to his discourses, entered into his discussions, or read his controversial papers ; unless, like Bysshe, he had a decided taste for such intellectual exercises, and was therefore as bad as himself ; if, indeed, there was anything bad in the matter, and it is quite certain, that there was not. As to making converts to any peculiar fancies, it is not by disputing, that conversions are made ; this is to be effected by persuasion, which is a very different process. When we were taking a walk together after he had been silent for a while, which happened occasionally, I have said to him, suddenly :

‘Come, Bysshe, let us have a good long controversy ! I am getting indifferent and lax, respecting my own crotchets, and so are you as to your well-founded opinions, most lamentably so ; let us dispute together for an hour or two, and each will confirm himself in his errors, and greatly strengthen them !’

He did not like my sally, feeling that the remark was but too just ; he called it scoffing, and perhaps it was ; and he added angrily :

‘Your mind is not fitted for the reception of truth !’ and perhaps it is not.

Having resided for three months very unpleasantly at Keswick, with every element of discomfort around him, and without the consolation of congenial society, for which the correspondence lately entered into with William Godwin proved an insufficient substitute, Bysshe was strongly impelled to change his abode, and to try to ameliorate his condition. The change which he proposed to himself was an extraordinary one ; it was a mission to Ireland, in order at once thereby to carry into effect Catholic emancipation, and to procure a repeal of the Union Act by means of an Association of philanthropists, and also to accomplish a complete regeneration of that country. I had never heard him mention Catholic Emancipation, or Catholic Disabilities ; and I do not believe that he ever had any definite notion of the meaning of these party phrases. As to the Union Act, I am very sure that he was always entirely ignorant of that statute, of its enactments and provisions, having

certainly never read a single clause, or line, of the Act, which he suddenly took upon himself to abrogate. I have often wondered, and endeavoured to discover, but without success, who put this notable project into his head. I have suspected that he fell in with some wandering apostle of Irish grievances hiding himself amongst the mountains, because he disliked the companionship of Oreads and Dryads less than that of sheriff's officers and catchpoles—with some Hibernian Hampden brimful of sympathy for his persecuted country, and of aversion for his persecuting creditors. I have supposed that the coffee-house in Mount Street was possibly infested by Irish patriots, and that he might therefore have received at home, through the original suggestions of these estimable clients and customers, a hint, or even a plan, of his wild-goose chase ; but I never could discover the source of the strange scheme. He did not communicate his intentions to me at the time. I never heard of his exploits in Dublin until after their termination, and but little did I learn at any period from himself. He seldom spoke of them. If he ever referred to the subject at all it was briefly ; and in truth he appeared to be heartily ashamed of the whole proceeding. Whatever can be discovered concerning this Irish dream, the vision of want of judgment, must be made out from his correspondence with his newly-acquired friend, and which has only recently come into my hands. In his letter of the 16th of January, 1812, he says : ' In a few days we set off to Dublin. Our journey has been settled for some time. We go principally to forward, as much as we (viz., Harriet, Eliza, and myself) can, the Catholic Emancipation'.

On the 28th of January, he writes : ' Your letter has reached me, on the eve of our departure for Dublin'.

A letter from Dublin of the 24th of February states that they have just arrived there. Six most interesting letters, three of them from William Godwin, will describe the labours of the mission in the capital of Ireland. Bysshe invariably sent me a copy of all his other works, whether long or short, in verse or in prose, as soon as they were published, or more commonly as soon as they were printed, but he never gave me, either at the time of their appearance or subsequently, his two Irish pamphlets. He never named them to me, and I saw them for the first time a few months ago. The first and longer pamphlet was written in England, as it informs us, and as was stated in a letter ; it is entitled *An Address to the Irish People, by Percy Bysshe Shelley : Dublin, 1812*. It consists of twenty-two pages,

closely and badly printed, on coarse paper ; its appearance is mean and vulgar. The title of the other pamphlet is 'Proposals for an Association of those philanthropists who, convinced of the inadequacy of the moral and political state of Ireland to produce benefits which are nevertheless attainable, are willing to unite to accomplish its regeneration ; by Percy B. Shelley : Dublin '. It is comprised in eighteen pages ; the type is somewhat larger, but its aspect is not more attractive. The author's address is the same in both, ' No. 7, Lower Sackville Street '. The pamphlets are exceedingly scarce ; I never saw any other copies than those which are now in my possession. I would willingly, therefore, give some extracts, but I cannot find a single paragraph worthy to be transcribed. They are poorly and feebly written ; the style and the matter are worthy of the printer and the occasion, but quite unworthy of the author.

DUBLIN, *Feb.* 24, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

A most tedious journey by sea and land has brought us to our destination. I have delayed a few days informing you of it, because I inclose with this a little pamphlet, which I have just printed, and thereby save a double expense. I have wilfully vulgarized the language of this pamphlet, in order to reduce the remarks it contains to the taste and comprehension of the Irish peasantry, who have been too long brutalized by vice and ignorance. I conceive that the benevolent passions of their breasts are in some degree excited, and individual interests in some degree generalized, by Catholic disqualifications and the oppressive influence of the Union Act ; that some degree of indignation has arisen at the conduct of the Prince Regent, which might tend to blind insurrections. A crisis like this ought not to be permitted to pass unoccupied or unimproved. I have another pamphlet in the press, earnestly recommending to a different class the institution of a philanthropic society. No *unnatural unanimity* can take place, if secessions of the minority on any question are invariably made. It might segregate into twenty different societies, each coinciding generically, though differing specifically.

We have had a most tedious voyage. We were driven by a storm completely to the north of Ireland, in our passage from the Isle of Man. Harriet, my wife, and Eliza, my sister-in-law, were very much fatigued, after twenty-eight hours' tossing in a

galliot during a violent gale. They are now tolerably recovered. I am exceedingly obliged by your letter of introduction to Mr. Curran. His speeches had interested me before I had any idea of coming to Ireland. It seems that he was the only man who would engage in behalf of the prisoners during the times of horror of the Rebellions. I have called upon him twice, but have not found him at home.

I hope that the motives which induce me to publish thus early in life do not arise from any desire of distinguishing myself any more than is consistent with and subordinate to usefulness. In the first place, my physical constitution is such as will not permit me to hope for a life so long as yours—the person who is constitutionally nervous, and affected by slight fatigue at the age of nineteen, cannot expect firmness and health at fifty. I have therefore resolved to husband whatever powers I may possess, so that they may turn to the best account. I find that whilst my mind is actively engaged in writing or discussion, that it gains strength at the same time—that the results of its present power are incorporated. I find that subjects grow out of conversation, and that though I begin a subject in writing with no definite view, it presently assumes a definite form, in consequence of the method that grows out of the induced train of thought. I therefore write, and I publish, because I will publish nothing that shall not conduce to virtue, and therefore my publications, so far as they do influence, shall influence to good. My views of society, and my hopes of it, meet with congenial ones in few breasts. But virtue and truth are congenial to many. I will employ no means but these for my object, and however visionary some may regard the ultimatum that I propose, if they act virtuously they will, equally with myself, forward its accomplishment; and my publications will present to the moralist and metaphysician a picture of a mind, however juvenile and unformed, which had at the dawn of its knowledge taken a singular turn; and to leave out the early lineaments of its appearance would be to efface those which the attrition of the world had not deprived of right-angled originality. Thus much for egotism.

I am sorry that you cannot come to Wales in the summer. I had pictured to my fancy that I should first meet you in a spot like that in which Fleetwood met Ruffigny; that then every lesson of your wisdom might become associated in my mind with the form of nature where she sports in the simplicity of her loveliness and magnificence, and each become imperish-

able together. This must not be yet. I will, however, hope that at some future time the sunset of your evening days may irradiate my soul in scenes like these. I will come to London next autumn. A very dear friend has promised to visit us in Merionethshire in the summer, and I will own that I am not sufficient of a Stoic not to perceive that the grand and ravishing shapes of nature add to the joys of friendship. Besides, you must know that I either am, or fancy myself something of a poet.

You speak of my wife : she desires with me to you, and to all connected with you, her best regards. She is a woman whose pursuits, hopes, fears, and sorrows were so similar to my own, that we married a few months ago. I hope in the course of this year to introduce her to you and yours, as I have introduced myself to you. It is only to those who have had some share in making me what I am that I can be thus free.—
Adieu !

You will hear from me shortly. Give my love and respects to every one with whom you are connected. I feel myself almost at your fireside.

Yours very sincerely,
P. B. SHELLEY.

Have they sent you the books ? I send the little book for which I was expelled. I know that Milton believed Christianity, but I do not forget that Virgil believed ancient mythology.

To Mr. W. Godwin, London.

March 4, 1812.

MY GOOD FRIEND,

I have read all your letters (the first perhaps excepted) with peculiar interest, and I wish it to be understood by you, unequivocally, that as far as I can yet penetrate into your character, I conceive it to exhibit an extraordinary assemblage of lovely qualities, not without considerable defects. The defects do and always have arisen chiefly from this source—that you are still very young, and that, in certain essential respects, you do not sufficiently perceive that you are so.

In your last letter you say, ‘ I publish, because I will publish nothing that shall not conduce to virtue ; and therefore my publications, so far as they do influence, shall influence to good ’.

Oh ! my friend, how short-sighted are the views which dictated this sentence ! Every man, in every deliberate action

very remote tendency to light again the flames of rebellion and war. It is painful to me to differ so much from your views on the subject, but it is my duty to tell you that such is the case.

Does it not follow, that you have read my writings very slightly ? I wish, at least, you had known whether our views were in harmony or opposition.

Discussion, reading, inquiry, perpetual communication, these are my favourite methods for the improvement of mankind : but associations, organized societies, I firmly condemn ; you may as well tell the adder not to sting ;

You may as well use question with the wolf ;
You may as well forbid the mountain pines
To wag their high tops, and to make no noise
When they are fretted with the gusts of heaven,

as tell organized societies of men, associated to obtain their rights and to extinguish oppression, prompted by a deep aversion to inequality, luxury, enormous taxes, and the evils of war, to be innocent, to employ no violence, and calmly to await the progress of truth. I never was at a public political dinner, a scene that I have not now witnessed for many years, that I did not see how the enthusiasm was lighted up, how the flame caught from man to man, how fast the dictates of sober reason were obliterated by the gusts of passion, and how near the assembly was like Alexander's compotators at Persepolis, to go forth and fire the city ; or like the auditors of Anthony's oration over the body of Cæsar, to apply a flaming brand to the mansion of each several conspirator.

Discussion and conversation on the best interests of society are excellent, as long as they are unfettered, and each man talks to his neighbour in the freedom of congenial intercourse, as he happens to meet with him in the customary haunts of men, or in the quiet and beneficent intercourse of each other's fireside. But they then become unwholesome and poisonous when men shape themselves into societies, and become distorted with the artifices of organization. It will not then long be possible to reason calmly and dispassionately ; men will heat each other into impatience and indignation against their oppressors ; they will be in a hurry to act. If this view of things is true, applied to any country whatever, it is peculiarly and fearfully so when applied to the fervent and impetuous character of the Irish.

The statement I have here made will end by convincing you, or we must be contented to entertain different, and almost

opposite views on this momentous subject. In this case, I can assure you, it will produce no estrangement in my feelings towards you. I shall still acknowledge, as forwardly as ever, the lovely qualities that I set out with confessing in you, and shall only deeply and earnestly lament that you have been so essentially misled in the exercise of them.

One principle, that I believe is wanting in you, and all our too fervent and impetuous reformers, is the thought, that almost every institution or form of society is good in its place, and in the period of time to which it belongs. How many beautiful and admirable effects grew out of Popery and the monastic institutions, in the period when they were in their genuine health and vigour ! To them we owe almost all our logic and our literature. What excellent effects do we reap, even at this day, from the feudal system and from chivalry ! In this point of view, nothing can, perhaps, be more worthy of our applause than the English constitution. Excellent to this purpose are the words of Daniel in his *Apology for Rhyme* ; ' Nor can it touch but of arrogant ignorance to hold this or that nation barbarous, these or those times gross, considering how this manifold creature, man, wheresoever he stand in the world, hath always some disposition of worth, entertains and affects that order of society which is best for his use, and is eminent for some one thing, or other, that fits his humours and the times '. This is the truest and most sublime toleration ! There is a period, indeed, when each institution is obsolete, and should be laid aside ; but it is of much importance, that we should not proceed too rapidly in this, or introduce any change before its due and proper season.

I perfectly agree with you when you say that it is highly improving for a man, who is ever to write for the public, that he should write much while he is young. It improves him equally in the art of thinking and of expressing his thoughts. Till we come to try to put our thoughts upon paper, we can have no notion how broken and imperfect they are, or find where the imperfection lies. Language is a scheme of machinery of so subtle a kind, that it is only by long habit that we can learn to conduct it in a masterly manner, or to the best purposes. Swift, an eminent master of language, says in a letter written, I think, when he was about eighteen—' Within these last few weeks I have written and blotted more quires of paper, and upon almost all sorts of subjects, than perhaps any other man you have known in a twelvemonth '.

But I see no necessary connection between writing and publishing ; and, least of all, with one's name. The life of a thinking man, who does this, will be made up of a series of retractions. It is beautiful to correct our errors, to make each day a comment on the last, and to grow perpetually wiser ; but all this need not be done before the public. It is commendable to wash one's face, but I will not wash mine in the saloon of the opera-house. A man may resolve, as you say, to present to the moralist and metaphysician a picture of all the successive turns and revolutions of his mind, and it is fit there should be some men, that should do this. But such a man must be contented to sacrifice general usefulness, and confine himself to this. Such a man was Rousseau ; but not such a man was Bacon, or Milton.

Mankind will ascribe little weight and authority to a versatile character, that makes a show of all his imperfections. How shall I rely upon a man, they cry, who is not himself in his public character at all times the same. I have myself, with all my caution, felt some of the effects of this. You have already begun your retraction. You confess that your thesis on Atheism was not well judged or wise, though you still seek to shelter yourself under the allegation, that it was harmless. I think the second chapter of your *Retractions* is not far distant.

You say that you count but on a short life. In that, too, you are erroneous. I shall not live to see you fourscore, but it is not impossible that my son will. I was myself, in early life, of a remarkably puny constitution. Pope, who was at all times kept alive only by means of art, reached his fifty-seventh year. The constitution of man is a theatre of change, and I think it not improbable, that at thirty, or forty, you will be a robust man.

How did you manage with Curran ? I hope you have seen him. I should not wonder, however, if your pamphlet has frightened him. You should have left my letter with your card the first time you called, and then it was his business to have sought you.

I have not received your little romances. If they have a publisher in London, and you had given me his name, I could then have sent for them, and enforced your order for their delivery. But in your handwriting I cannot even read their names.

One strange expression of your pamphlet give me leave to

notice. You say to the people of Ireland: 'I have come to this country to spare no pains, where expenditure may purchase your real benefit'. Does this mean money? Do you mean to contract debts, and lay out your thousands in establishing the association you so warmly recommend?

To descend from great things to small, I can perceive, that you are already infected with the air of that country. Your letter with its inclosures cost me, by post, £1 1s. 8d.; and you say in it, that, 'you send it in this way to save expense'. The post always charges parcels that exceed a sheet or two, by weight, and they should, therefore, always be forwarded by some other conveyance.

Perhaps in this letter I have assumed too much of the instructor, and expressed myself with a bluntness and freedom that will shock you. The length of my letter ought to convince you of the warmth of my feelings, and my earnest desire to serve you.

To P. B. Shelley, Dublin.

DUBLIN, SACKVILLE STREET, *March 8, 1812.*

MY DEAR SIR,

Your letter affords me much food for thought; guide thou and direct me. In all the weakness of my inconsistencies, learn with me; the genuine respect which I bear for your character, the love with which your virtues have inspired me, is undiminished by any suspicion of externally constituted authority; when you reprove me, reason speaks; I acquiesce in her decisions. I know that I am vain, that I assume a character which is perhaps unadapted to the limitedness of my experience, that I am without the modesty which is so generally considered an indispensable ornament to the ingenuousness of youth. I attempt not to conceal from others, or myself, these deficiencies, if such they are. That I have erred in pursuance of this line of conduct, I am well aware: in the opposite case, I think that my errors would have been more momentous and overwhelming. 'A preponderance of resulting good is imagined in every action'. I certainly believe that the line of conduct which I am now pursuing will produce a preponderance of good; when I get rid of this conviction, my conduct shall be changed.

Inquiry is doubtless necessary, nay, essential. I am eagerly open to every new information. I attempt to read a book

which attacks my most cherished sentiments as calmly as one which corroborates them. I have not read your writings slightly ; they have made a deep impression on my mind ; their arguments are fresh in my memory ; I have daily occasion to recur to them, as allies in the cause which I am here engaged in vindicating. To them, to you, I owe the inestimable boon of granted power, of arising from the state of intellectual sickness and lethargy into which I was plunged two years ago, and of which *St. Irvyn* and *Zastrozzi* were the distempered, although unoriginal visions.

I am not forgetful or unheeding of what you said of associations. But *Political Justice* was first published in 1793 ; nearly twenty years have elapsed since the general diffusion of its doctrines. What has followed ? Have men ceased to fight ? Have vice and misery vanished from the earth ? Have the fireside communications which it recommends taken place ? Out of the many who have read that inestimable book, how many have been blinded by prejudice ; how many, in short, have taken it up to gratify an ephemeral vanity, and when the hour of its novelty had passed, threw it aside, and yielded with fashion to the arguments of Mr. Malthus ?

I have at length proposed a Philanthropic Association, which I conceive not to be contradictory, but strictly compatible with the principles of *Political Justice*. The *Address* was principally designed to operate on the Irish mob. Can they be in a worse state than at present ? Intemperance and hard labour have reduced them to machines. The oyster that is washed and driven at the mercy of the tides, appears to me an animal of almost equal elevation in the scale of intellectual being. Is it impossible to awaken a moral sense in the breasts of those who appear so unfitted for the high destination of their nature ? Might not an unadorned display of moral truth, suited to their comprehensions, produce the best effects ? The state of society appears to me to be retrogressive. If there be any truth in the hopes which I so fondly cherish, then this cannot be. Yet, even if it be stationary, the eager activity of philanthropists is demanded. I think of the last twenty years with impatient scepticism, as to the progress which the human mind has made during this period. I will own that I am eager that something should be done. But my association. In some suggestions respecting it, I have the following—' That any number of persons who meet together for philanthropical purposes, should ascertain by friendly

discussion those points of opinion wherein they differ and those wherein they coincide, and should, by subjecting them to rational analysis, produce an unanimity founded on reason, and not the superficial agreement too often exhibited at associations for mere party purposes; that the minority, whose belief could not subscribe to the opinion of the majority on a division in any question of moment and interest, should recede'.

'Some associations might, by refinement of secessions, contain not more than three or four members'. I do not think a society such as this is incompatible with your chapter on associations; it purposes no violent or immediate measures; its intentions are a facilitation of inquiry, and actually to carry into effect those confidential and private communications which you recommend. I send you with this the proposals, which will be followed by the 'suggestions'.

I had no conception of the depth of human misery until now. The poor of Dublin are assuredly the meanest and most miserable of all. In their narrow streets thousands seem huddled together,—one mass of animated filth. With what eagerness do such scenes as these inspire me! How self-confident, too, do I feel in my assumption to teach the lessons of virtue to those who grind their fellow beings into worse than annihilation. These were the persons to whom, in my fancy, I had addressed myself: how quickly were my views on this subject changed; yet how deeply has this very change rooted the conviction on which I came hither.

I do not think that my book can in the slightest degree tend to violence. The pains which I have taken, even to tautology, to insist on pacific measures; the necessity which every warrior and rebel must lie under to deny almost every passage of my book before he can become so, must at least exculpate me from tending to make him so. I shudder to think, that for the very roof that covers me, for the bed whereon I lie, I am indebted to the selfishness of man. A remedy must somewhere have a beginning. Have I explained myself clearly? Are we now at issue?

I have not seen Mr. Curran. I have called repeatedly, left my address and my pamphlet. I *will* see him before I leave Dublin. I send a newspaper, and the 'proposals'. I had no conception that the packet I sent you would be sent by the post; I thought it would have reached you per coach.

Harriet joins in respects to you. Is your denial respecting

Wales irrevocable ? Would not your children gain health and spirits from the jaunt ?

With sincerest respect, yours,
P. B. SHELLEY.

You will see the account of ME in the newspapers. I am vain, but not so foolish as not to be rather piqued than gratified at the eulogia of a journal. I have repeated my injunctions concerning *St. I.* and *Z.*

Expenditure is used in my address in a moral sense.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

March 14, 1812.

I TAKE up the pen again immediately on the receipt of yours, because I am desirous of making one more effort to save yourself and the Irish people from the calamities with which, I see, your mode of proceeding to be fraught. In the commencement of this letter you profess to 'acquiesce in my decisions', and you go on with those measures which, with no sparing and equivocal voice, I have condemned. I smile, with a bitter smile, a smile of much pain, at the impotence of my expostulations on so momentous a topic, when I observe these inconsistencies.

I have received nothing from you on this occasion but a letter and a newspaper. If you sent anything else—which I suspect from your saying, 'I send you with this the Proposals'—it has not reached me; and I mention this circumstance because, of course, 'I can only reason from what I know',—though I am as well assured as I can be of any moral truth whatever, that nothing that is behind can possibly vitiate and overturn the conclusions I came to in my last letter, and which I repeat in this.

You say in the extract contained in the *Weekly Messenger*, 'I propose an association for the following purposes: first, of debating on the propriety of whatever measures may be agitated; and, secondly, for carrying, by united and individual exertion, such measures into effect when determined on'.

Can anything be plainer than this? Do you not here exhort persons, who you say 'are of scarcely greater elevation in the scale of intellectual being than the oyster: thousands huddled together, one mass of animated filth', to take the redress of grievances into their own hands.

But if it were exactly the contrary, if you exhorted them

to meet, having their hands carefully tied behind them before they came together, what would that avail? Would not the first strong sympathetic impulse which shot through the circle, like the electric fluid, cause them 'to break their cords, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire?'

The people of Ireland have been for a series of years in a state of diseased activity; and, misjudging that you are, you talk of awakening them. They will rise up like Cadmus's seed of dragon's teeth, and their first act will be to destroy each other. You say, 'the pains you have taken, even to tautology, to insist on pacific measures, must at least exculpate you from tending to make the Irish peasant a warrior and a rebel!' This is not the language of a philosopher, or a reasoner. If you are 'eager that something should be done', you must take all the consequences of your efforts for that purpose. It behoves the friend of man to search into the hidden seeds of things, and to view events in their causes. He scarcely deserves the name, who plunges without consideration into a sea of important measures, and leaves the final result of all he begins to chance.

You have 'insisted on pacific measures, even to tautology, and therefore judge yourself exculpated'. But this is not so. I have made a main pillar of my doctrines of Political Justice—a hostility to associations: and yet I cannot but consider your fearful attempt at creating a chain of associations as growing, however indirectly and unfairly, out of my book. If you had never read my book, you would probably never have gone to Ireland upon the errand that has now led you thither. I shall ever regret this effect of my book; and I can only seek consolation in the belief that it has done more good to many other persons, and the hope that it may contribute, with other mightier and more important causes, to the melioration of future ages.

You say, 'what has been done within the last twenty years?' Oh, that I could place you on the pinnacle of ages, from which these twenty years would shrink to an invisible point! It is not after this fashion that moral causes work in the eye of Him who looks profoundly through the vast and, allow me to add, venerable machine of human society. But so reasoned the French revolutionists. Auspicious and admirable materials were working in the general mind of France; but these men said, as you say, when we look on the last twenty years, 'we are seized with a sort of moral scepticism—we must own we

are eager that something should be done'. And see what has been the result of their doings ! He that would benefit mankind on a comprehensive scale, by changing the principles and elements of society, must learn the hard lesson—to put off self, and to contribute by a quiet, but incessant activity, like a rill of water, to irrigate and fertilize the intellectual soil.

Shelley, you are preparing a scene of blood ! If your associations take effect to any extensive degree, tremendous consequences will follow, and hundreds, by their calamities and premature fate, will expiate your error. And then what will it avail you to say, 'I warned them against this ; when I put the seed into the ground, I laid my solemn injunctions upon it, that it should not germinate ?'

If you wish to consider the sentiments which in the earnestness of my soul I have presented to you, you should consider my two letters as parts of the same discourse, and read them together. Do not be restrained by a false shame from retracing your steps ; you cannot say, like Macbeth, 'I am in blood-steps, in so far, that should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o'er'.

I wish to my heart you would come immediately to London. I have a friend who has contrived a tube to convey passengers sixty miles an hour. Be youth your tube ! I have a thousand things I could say orally, more than I can say in a letter, on this important subject. Away ! You cannot imagine how much all the females of my family, Mrs. G. and three daughters, are interested in your letters and your history.

17, GRAFTON STREET, *March* 18, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have said that I acquiesce in your decision, nor has my conduct militated with the assertion. I have withdrawn from circulation the publications wherein I erred, and am preparing to quit Dublin. It is not because I think that *such* associations as I conceived, would be deleterious, that I have withdrawn them. It is possible to festinate, or retard, the progress of human perfectibility ; such associations as I would have recommended would be calculated to produce the former effect ; the refinement of secessions would prevent a fictitious unanimity, as their publicity would render ineffectual any schemes of violent innovation. I am not one of those whom pride will restrain from admitting my own short-sightedness,

or confessing a conviction which wars with those previously avowed. My schemes of organizing the ignorant I confess to be ill-timed. I cannot conceive that they were dangerous, as unqualified publicity was likewise enforced : moreover, I do not see that a peasant would attentively read my address, and, arising from the perusal, become imbued in sentiments of violence and bloodshed.

It is indescribably painful to contemplate beings capable of soaring to the heights of science, with Newton and Locke, without attempting to awaken them from a state of lethargy so opposite. The part of this city called the Liberty, exhibits a spectacle of squalidness and misery, such as might reasonably excite impatience in a cooler temperament than mine. But I submit ; I shall address myself no more to the illiterate. I will look to events in which it will be impossible that I can share, and make myself the cause of an effect which will take place ages after I have mouldered in the dust ; I need not observe that this resolve requires stoicism. To return to the heartless bustle of ordinary life, to take interest in its uninteresting details ; I cannot. Wholly to abstract our views from self, undoubtedly requires unparalleled disinterestedness. There is not a completer abstraction than labouring for distant ages.

My association scheme undoubtedly grew out of my notions of political justice, first generated by your book on that subject. I had not, however, read in vain of confidential discussions, and a recommendation for their general adoption ; not in vain had I been warned against a fictitious unanimity. I have had the opportunity of witnessing the latter at public dinners. The peculiarity of my association would have consisted in combining the adoption of the former with the rejection of the latter. Moreover, I desired to sink the question of immediate grievance in the more general and remote consideration of a highly perfectible state of society. I desired to embrace the present opportunity for attempting to forward the accomplishment of that event, and my ultimate views looked to an establishment of those familiar parties for discussion which have not yet become general.

It appears to me that on the publication of *Political Justice* you looked to a more rapid improvement than has taken place. It is my opinion, that if your book had been as general as the Bible, human affairs would now have exhibited a very different aspect.

I have read your letters—read them with the attention and reverence they deserve. Had *I*, like you, been witness to the French Revolution, it is probable that my caution would have been greater. I have seen and heard enough to make me doubt the omnipotence of truth in a society so constituted, as that wherein we live. I shall make you acquainted with all my proceedings ; if I err, probe me severely.

If I was alone, and had made no engagements, I would immediately come to London : as it is, I defer it for a time. We leave Dublin in three weeks.

A woman of extraordinary talents, whom I am so happy as to enroll in the list of those who esteem me, has engaged to visit me in Wales. Mrs. Shelley earnestly desires me to make one last attempt to induce you to visit Wales. If *you* absolutely cannot, may not your amiable family, with whom we all long to become acquainted, breathe with us the pure air of the mountains ? Lest there be any informality in the petition, Mrs. Shelley desires her regards to Mrs. Godwin and family, urging the above. Miss Westbrook, my sister-in-law, resides with us ; and, in one thing at least, none of us are deficient, viz., zeal and sincerity.

Fear no more for any violence, or hurtful measures, in which I may be instrumental in Dublin. My mind is now by no means settled on the subject of associations : they appear to me in one point of view useful, in another deleterious. I acquiesce in your decisions. I am neither haughty, reserved, not unpersuadable. I hope that time will show your pupil to be more worthy of your regard than you have hitherto found him ; at all events, that he will never be otherwise than sincere and true to you.

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

March 30, 1812.

DEAR SHELLEY,

I received your last letter on the 24th instant, and the perusal of it gave me a very high degree of pleasure. The way in which my emotion of pleasure poured itself out was in writing a letter to Curran, stating that I supposed he had kept himself aloof from you on account of your pamphlet, and that at my importunity you had given up your project, and that being the case, I trusted he would oblige me by seeking

the man, whom, under different circumstances, he had probably thought himself bound to shun. This was the most expressive way I could think of, to convey to you the delight I felt in your conduct. I have since, however, reflected that accidents might happen to prevent my project from taking effect in the manner, or at the time, I intended, and therefore I felt it incumbent on me to convey the language of my emotions directly to yourself. I can now look upon you as a friend. Before, I knew not what might happen. It was like making an acquaintance with Robert Emmett, who, I believe, like yourself, was a man of a very pure mind, but respecting whom I could not have told, from day to day, what calamities he might bring upon his country ; how effectually (like the bear in the fable) he might smash the nose of his mother to pieces, when he intended only to remove the noxious insect that tormented her—what premature and tragical fate he might bring down upon himself. Now I can look on you, not as a meteor, ephemeral, but as a lasting friend, who, according to the course of nature, may contribute to the comforts of my closing days. Now I can look on you as a friend, like myself, but I hope more effectually and actively useful, who is prone to study the good of his fellow men, but with no propensities threatening to do them extensive mischief under the form and intention of benefit.

I observe that you are but half a convert to my arguments. No matter, you have auspiciously yielded to them, and time will do the rest. You say ' you do not see that a peasant could arise from the perusal of your address to become imbued in sentiments of violence and bloodshed '. This is the language of an embryo philosopher, not of one who had passed a long and patient noviciate in the study of the human mind.

Moral causes are like chemical ones. When the chemist adds another ingredient to his mixture, he must think not only of the qualities of that ingredient, but of those of all the ingredients that have gone before, or else he will be little qualified to anticipate the result. The ingredient he has added is perhaps, considered by itself, entirely innoxious ; but if, cooperating with what was before in the retort, it blows up his machinery, or his chamber, or himself and the houses of next neighbours in the air, he is, upon a strict and sound calculation, answerable for the event. If he did not understand the thing with which he intermeddled, he should have withheld his profane hands from so awful a business. If he had not unthink-

ingly added his last fatal ingredient, no such calamity would have taken place.

You say ' I will look to events, in which it will be impossible I can share, or make myself the cause of an effect, which will take place ages after I shall have mouldered into dust '. In saying this, you run from one extreme to the other. I have often had occasion to apply a principle on the subject of education which is equally applicable here : ' Be not early discouraged, sow the seed, and after a season, and when you least look for it, it will germinate and produce a crop '. I have again and again been hopeless concerning the children, with whom I have voluntarily, or by the laws of society, been concerned. Seeds of intellect and knowledge, seeds of moral judgment and conduct, I have sown, but the soil for a long time seemed ' ungrateful to the tiller's care '. It was not so. The happiest operations were going on quietly and unobserved, and at the moment, when it was of the most importance, they unfolded themselves to the delight of every beholder. These instances of surprise are owing solely to the bluntness of our senses. *You* find little difference between the men of these islands and of Europe now and twenty years ago. If you looked more keenly into these things, you would perceive that the alteration is immense. The human race has made larger strides to escape from a state of childhood in these twenty years, than perhaps in any hundred years preceding. The thing most to be desired, I believe, is to keep up the intellectual, and in some sense the solitary, fermentation, and to procrastinate the contact and consequent action. This thing has its time. ' In the hour that ye think not, the Son of Man cometh '.

To P. B. Shelley, Dublin.

W. G.

CHAPTER XVII

THERE was one meeting of Philanthropists, for it was reported in a newspaper, and probably puffed a little, perhaps for a valuable consideration : whether there were more meetings does not appear. Poor Bysshe made a speech, and proposed his scheme, but it did not succeed. He talks about ' sobriety, regularity, and thought ', in his printed discourses ; ' that before anything can be done with effect, these must be entered

into, and firmly resolved upon'. 'Irishmen must reform themselves, not by force of arms, but by power of mind, and reliance on truth and justice. No Irishman must swerve from the path of duty. Be open, sincere, single-hearted. O Irishmen, reform yourselves; desire peace and harmony, benevolence and a spirit of forgiveness; form habits of sobriety, regularity, and thought; accommodate yourselves to the progression of wisdom and virtue, to peace, philanthropy, and wisdom'. Of such phrases, of such simples, is the printed panacea compounded; no doubt the oral lecture repeated the same forms of speech. There is nothing taking in all this, and it did not take; the association was damned at the first representation. The poet was soon weary of the inspired and unsuccessful dream; probably, if the project had succeeded, so versatile was his nature, he would have got tired of it all the sooner. Had he founded an association, he would have started off suddenly and have quitted in a moment, and for ever forgotten the beautiful creation. The fickle and unnatural parent, like the ostrich, would have speedily abandoned his helpless, or hopeful progeny. He had written, 'I have come to this country to spare no pains, where expenditure may purchase your real benefit.

If any trading patriots, hireling and hungry agitators, attended the philanthropic meeting, supposing that the expenditure was to be of money, when they discovered that the young orator had not a shilling in his pocket, and that, therefore, nothing was to be gotten, but good advice, which they did not need, they soon withdrew themselves from the barren pursuit of pure philanthropy: and those old stagers, who deemed the wrongs of Ireland, as their own peculiar property and freehold, were jealous of an interloper, who might interfere with their long-established begging-box.

Shelley says, 'Expenditure is used in my address in a moral sense'; and his moral audience perhaps, soon perceived that such was his real meaning, and accordingly took their leave of him.

Having quickly grown tired of his hopeless scheme, Bysshe persuaded himself, that the arguments of William Godwin had persuaded him to abandon it, and to leave the country; and he readily made the old philosopher believe this; and he was much gratified and flattered by the imaginary triumph, and more firmly convinced than ever, of the absolute omnipo-
tence of ratiocination, conducted after the method laid down

in his brief tractate of *Political Justice*. Whereas, this very curious correspondence proves exactly the contrary, and shows clearly, that arguments were of no avail. By ingenious sophistry the young repealer, so long as he had any taste for repeal, always avoids them with dexterity ; or he resists them by setting up some fancy to serve as an excuse for not yielding to them, as, for example, his feeble health, which he urges on this occasion, as he did on many others.

'Until my marriage my life had been a series of illness ; as it was of a nervous and spasmodic nature, it in a degree incapacitated me for study ; I nevertheless in the intervals of comparative health read romances, and those the most marvellous ones, unremittingly, and pored over the reveries of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus, the former of which I read in Latin, and probably gained more knowledge of that language from that source, than from all the discipline of Eton.'

He had picked up at second-hand some vague notions of these reveries, but that he had ever read the writings of Albertus Magnus in Latin was a mere visionary fancy. He never possessed the works of that author, and as they fill twenty-one volumes folio, they could not be hidden under a bushel.

Whenever he was hard pressed, his poetical imagination invented the touching fable of a delicate and dangerous state of health ; his robust microcosm became in an instant the theatre of dire disease ; spasms, consumptions, breakings of bloodvessels, veins and arteries, crowded thickly upon him, as a pretence for undertaking what he eagerly desired, but felt to be imprudent and improper.

William Godwin was not yet personally acquainted with him ; he knew nothing of his volunteer tyro, but what he had been able to gather from half-a-dozen epistles penned in a romantic, rapturous, exalted strain ; otherwise he would not have felt any apprehensions of danger to himself or others to arise from his day-dreams, even when they assumed for a few hours a political character. Had he been aware how little he was prone to engage in wars himself, or to be the cause of warfare in others, he would not have likened his case to that of Robert Emmett and of the other well-hanged heroes of the Croppies' Hole. Nevertheless, the earnest and solemn warnings, albeit unnecessary, were wise and well-meant, and praise and gratitude were due for the kind and friendly intentions of his

Mentor. His inspired brain, elevated and carried away by a poetic temperament, was perfectly inaccessible to reason ; so long as the fit of inspiration lasted Bysshe was indocile, intractable, and unmanageable. It has been said that his friend, William Godwin, had great influence over him, and so he had ; but his influence, in fact, amounted to this—that no man could more readily persuade him to do whatever he was himself already resolved upon doing.

If Shelley had the eccentricity of a comet, he had likewise its inconceivable rapidity. From the postscript of his *Address to the Irish people*, we may judge of the astonishing velocity with which he approached the sun, and then receded from it ; shooting along his trajectory to come suddenly into sight, flame meteor-like across the heavens, and then as suddenly to vanish, plunging into the abyss of infinite space. It affords an amusing instance of the speed with which he arrived at his conclusions, and adopted his measures. 'I have now been a *week* in Dublin, during which time I have endeavoured to make myself more accurately acquainted with the state of the public mind on those great topics of grievances which induced me to select Ireland as a theatre, the widest and fairest, for the operations of the determined friend of religious and political freedom. The result of my observations has determined me to propose an association for the purpose of restoring Ireland to the prosperity which she possessed before the Union Act'. If the obnoxious Act could have been repealed, and the pristine prosperity restored, in another week, the grievances of injured Ireland might possibly have been redressed ; but if a longer time, a few days more, had been required, that sacred, winged thing, a Poet, would unquestionably have flown far away before the deep degradation could have been removed by his mediation from the Island of Saints and Virgins.

Twice—not oftener, I believe—he spoke to me of his Irish mission. On one occasion, he told me that at a meeting—probably at the meeting of Philanthropists—so much ill-will was shown towards the Protestants, that thereupon he was provoked to remark, that the Protestants were fellow Christians, fellow subjects, and as such were entitled to equal rights, to equal charity, toleration, and the rest. He was forthwith interrupted by savage yells ; a tremendous uproar arose, and he was compelled to be silent. At the same meeting, and afterwards, he was even threatened with personal violence. This unseasonable display of popish and

party bigotry went far to disgust him with his rash enterprise, to open his eyes, and to convince him that Irish grievances consisted not in a denial of equal rights, these the Philanthropic Association did not seek, but the power and opportunity to tyrannize over and to oppress their Protestant brethren. The other time, he spoke of Curran, and with distaste.

Bysshe was serious, thoughtful, enthusiastic; melancholy even, with a poet's sadness: he loved to discourse gravely of matters of importance and deep concernment; the unceasing jests, perpetual farce, and profane and filthy ribaldry of the comic Master of the Rolls he found wearisome, puerile, and worse. In behaviour modest; in conversation chaste; like some pure, innocent young maiden, the gross and revolting indecency of an immoral wit wounded his sensitive nature. Moreover, the old equity judge talked of his Hibernian hearth, of an Irishman's fireside, of domestic matters, and of his own family affairs, in a way not to be repeated, and which hurt the best feelings of his meek young guest.

Shelley seldom indulged in a pleasantry, and William Godwin as seldom reported one; a jest of the former, given on the relation of the latter, is at least a rarity of facetiousness.

A dull, boring fellow, who was accustomed, as other slow-witted seekers after truth were also, to propound questions to William Godwin, and to accept his answers, when they could be extracted, as oracles, inquired one day in Shelley's presence, with all solemnity, 'Pray, William Godwin, what is your opinion of love?' The oracle was silent. After a while, he who came to consult, repeated his question, 'Pray, William Godwin, what is your opinion of love?' The oracle was still silent, but Shelley answered for him.

'My opinion of love is, that it acts upon the human heart precisely as a nutmeg-grater acts upon a nutmeg.'

The grave inquirer heard the jesting answer with mute contempt; and presently repeated his question a third time. 'Pray, William Godwin, what is your opinion of love?'

'My opinion entirely agrees with that of Mr. Shelley.'

One word more of Curran—of the witty and eloquent patriot, Curran. Certainly they are good-natured people at Liverpool; having had lodgings there—apartments they call them—for some twenty years, since assizes have been held there, and commonly twice a year in travelling the Northern Circuit, I may truly affirm that I have invariably been treated with attention and kindness. One summer assizes, from

some retardation of the train, I 'arrived at my lodgings much later than the prescribed time, and therefore even more fatigued than usual with the improbity of a long journey by railway from London. Dinner was not to be thought of, so I ordered tea, and after a cup or two my spirits revived, and I boldly asked for chops. A couple of lamb chops were presently served up and eaten. By-and-by, a gentle tapping at the door was heard. 'Come in'. The door was opened a little, and a head appeared, with the likeness of a cook's head.

'Shall you have another chop? Will I do you another chop?'

'No, I thank you, no more!'

'Were they not agreeable, then?'

'Perfectly agreeable. They were excellent; good meat, and very well dressed!'

'Oh! Botheration!' The door flew wide open, and the whole cook stood confessed. 'Do you think that the niece of the Right Honourable John Philpot Curran, Master of the Rolls in Ireland, does not know how to *bryle* a chop?'

'Is your name Curran, then?'

'Sure, and it is, your honour!'

'Are you related to the late Master of the Rolls?'

'I am not in any way particularly related to him. I am just his niece!'

This was most probably a misapprehension, a mistake; genealogies are too commonly a tissue of mistakes: however, as the alleged uncle was, according to his biographer, a person of very low origin, it is just possible that the cook's pedigree was correct: I leave it to the jury.

When I first became acquainted with the Shelley family, they were evidently consanguineous; it was all, my uncle, and my aunt; my cousin this, my cousin that, and my cousin the other; my nephew and my niece: this is very amiable, certainly, and a united family is delightful. Nevertheless, consanguinity, it cannot be denied, is eminently conducive to commonplace. Bysshe fell in love at an early age—violently, desperately in love, with a fair cousin. He formed philosophical friendships with his sisters, and enlightened his uncle, the captain: if all this addiction to his own kindred had gone on smoothly to the end, without let or hindrance; and if he had made his not ungenial father the chosen companion of his studies, and the associate in his bolder specu-

lations—and possibly it might have been effected—domestic peace and felicity would have been promoted. Yet genius, originality, novelty, flights of fancy, and poetic daring would have been sadly checked—docked and curtailed. This was not to be; all family bonds were burst and broken for ever, and his estrangement became complete. A wise Providence leads on its favourites to grand results by paths which, to short-sighted mortals, appear rough and perilous.

The Irish dream which commenced so abruptly, being brought as abruptly to an end, the youthful dreamer awoke; then suddenly vanished, and reappeared in Wales. He was revealed to those only whose function it was at that period to guide, or to mislead him; for my own part, I learnt nothing whatever, either of him, or of his adventures, for some time afterwards; and, until very lately, I never saw those letters from which alone my imperfect narrative of this portion of his history is drawn.

More epistles to his 'venerated friend' will display what is to be known of this restless part of his life: but they are filled with the mythic tale of his early days, rather than with a detail of his actual mode of existence. We can only arrive at a general conclusion—that it was uncomfortable. A climate wet and stormy, where the spring months are particularly cold and ungenial, is ill-adapted to promote the well-being of any man; it was especially noxious to a constitution prone to the diseases by which he believed himself to be afflicted. For solid reasons of romance, he had determined to settle, probably 'for ever', in Merionethshire—the most objectionable, perhaps, as to weather and temperature, of the twelve objectionable counties of the Principality—because it was feigned to have been the scene of some of the imaginary operations of the hero of one of the less popular of William Godwin's novels, and because the locality had been described by the author who had never himself seen it.

To live in Sherwood Forest—in merry Sherwood—because bold Robin Hood had drawn a long bow there; to dwell at Warwick, because in that town Guy had killed the red cow; to rent a house, because Little Red Riding Hood and Hop-o-my-Thumb had peeped in at the window, and run away again—such are the motives of enthusiasm, and they are worthy of reverence; but surely the preferences of pilgrims and crusaders may claim the like courtesy.

Although Merionethshire was the scene of Fleetwood's

early life, not even temporary accommodation was to be found there, and the young wanderers had tried in vain to obtain a house at several other places. Their peregrination is spoken of with the usual poetical amplification, 'We traversed the whole of North and a part of South Wales fruitlessly'. They met with a residence at last, called Nantgwilt, near Rhayader, in Radnorshire, but they were not completely certain of being able to obtain it; and in fact, they did not obtain it. Some months previously he had spent ten days or a fortnight at the house of his cousin in the neighbourhood of Rhayader.

Bysshe's letters, addressed to myself during that visit, prove, as has been seen, that the scenery made very little impression upon him at the time, but his poetic imagination had brooded over it, and had produced this magnificent and affecting picture:

'Nantgwilt, the place where we now reside, is in the neighbourhood of scenes marked deeply on my mind by the thoughts which possessed it, when present among them. The ghosts of these old friends have a dim and strange appearance, when resuscitated, in a situation so altered as mine is, since I felt that they were alive.'

The poet and his family were dull, lonely, and uncomfortable in their cold solitude; this is proved by their anxious desire to draw others into the like painful position, and to make them partakers of the dreary delights of a romantic existence. It would have been hard to have compelled Æschylus to quit his snug garret, or attic in Athens, and inhabit the snowy Caucasus, because, in a tragedy, he had chained Prometheus on that inhospitable mountain. It would have been not less cruel to press a London bookseller, to tear him from his frequented shop in the city and his business, to carry him off the stones and out of the sound of Bow-bell, and to force the poor fellow to stray with the hungry sheep on the side of proud Plinlimmon, because he had rashly bestowed immortality upon that verdant region in a pretty pastoral, or by some other handicraft of the sacred sisters.

Harriet and Eliza were, no doubt, especially uneasy, the latter in particular. Harriet could employ and amuse herself with the sages and legislators of antiquity, in writing, reading, and reading aloud. But that dear Eliza! To brush the hair unceasingly, there being nobody within miles to admire it, from morn till night, even in the sweetest, loveliest seclu-

sion ; to polish everlastingly a head which did not contain one single idea, must indeed be a weary lot !

'Gracious heaven ! what would Miss Warne say ?'

What would she have said had she been translated from the chatty bar and the cheerful coffee-room to the vast silence that reigns amidst the scenes of Fleetwood's early life ? No wonder, then, that these deserted, bewildered females were continually worrying the family of William Godwin—persons of whom they knew nothing whatever—to join them in the wilderness, being willing and desirous to take the chance of any strangers, whose presence might save them from themselves.

NANTGWILT, RHAYADER, RADNORSHIRE, SOUTH WALES,

April 25, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

At length we are in a manner settled. The difficulty of obtaining a house in Wales (like many other difficulties) is greater than I had imagined. We determined, on quitting Dublin, to settle in Merionethshire, the scene of Fleetwood's early life, but there we could find not even temporary accommodation. We traversed the whole of North and part of South Wales fruitlessly, and our peregrinations have occupied nearly all the time since the date of my last.

We are no longer in Dublin. Never did I behold in any other spot a contrast so striking as that which grandeur and misery form in that unfortunate country. How forcibly do I feel the remark which you put into the mouth of Fleetwood, that the distress which in the country humanizes the heart by its infrequency, is calculated in a city, by the multiplicity of its demands for relief, to render us callous to the contemplation of wretchedness. Surely the inequality of rank is not felt so oppressively in England. Surely something might be devised for Ireland, even consistent with the present state of politics, to ameliorate its condition. Curran at length called on me. I dined twice at his house. Curran is certainly a man of great abilities, but it appears to me that he undervalues his powers when he applies them to what is usually the subject of his conversation. I may not possess sufficient taste to relish humour, or his incessant comicality may weary that which I possess. He does not possess that mould of mind which I have been accustomed to contemplate with the highest feelings of respect and love. In short, though Curran

indubitably possesses a strong understanding and a brilliant fancy, I should not have beheld him with the feelings of admiration which his first visit excited, had he not been your intimate friend.

Nantgwilt, the place where we now reside, is in the neighbourhood of scenes marked deeply on my mind by the thoughts, which possessed it, when present among them. The ghosts of these old friends have a dim and strange appearance, when resuscitated, in a situation so altered as mine is, since I felt that they were alive. I have never detailed to you my short, yet eventful life ; but when we meet, if my account be not candid, sincere, and full, how unworthy should I be of such a friend and adviser as that whom I now address ! We are not yet completely certain of being able to obtain the house where now we are. It has a farm of two hundred acres, and the rent is but forty-eight pounds per annum. The cheapness, beauty, and retirement make this place in every point of view desirable. Nor can I view this scenery—mountains and rocks seeming to form a barrier round this quiet valley, which the tumult of the world may never overleap ; the guileless habits of the Welsh—without associating *your* presence with the idea, that of your wife, your children, and one other friend, to complete the picture which my mind has drawn to itself of felicity. Steal, if possible, my revered friend, one summer from the cold hurry of business, and come to Wales.—Adieu !

Harriet desires to join me in kindest remembrances to yourself, Mrs. G., and family. She joins also in earnest wishes that you would all visit us.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

NANTGWILT, *June 3, 1812.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I hasten to dissipate the unfavourable impressions you seem to have received from my silence. Mrs. Godwin, in a letter to my wife, mentions the existence of *your* letter in Ireland. This I have never been able to recover ; indeed, I am confident that the date of your last was considerably anterior to the 30th of March.

My health has been far from good since I wrote to you, and I have been day after day tormented, and rendered anxious by the delay of legal business necessary to secure this house to us. I do not say that anything can absolutely excuse any neglect to you ; but the constant expectancy that the suc-

ceeding day would bring a train of thought more favourable than the present, together with your expected letter, may be permitted to palliate it.

I hope, my venerated friend, that you will soon permit the time to arrive when you may know me as I am—when you may consult those lineaments which cannot deceive—and be placed in a situation which will obviate the possibility of delusion.

I revert with pleasure to the latter part of your letter, and entreat you to erase from your mind the impressions which occasioned the former. They shall never, assure yourself, find occasion of renewal. Until my marriage, my life had been a series of illness, as it was, of a nervous and spasmodic nature, which in a degree incapacitated me for study. I nevertheless, in the intervals of comparative health, read romances, and those the most marvellous ones, unremittingly, and pored over the reveries of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus, the former of which I read in Latin, and probably gained more knowledge of that language from that source than from all the discipline of Eton. My fondness for natural magic and ghosts abated, as my age increased. I read Locke, Hume, Reid, and whatever metaphysics came in my way, without, however, renouncing poetry, an attachment to which has characterized all my wanderings and changes. I did not truly *think* and *feel*, however, until I read *Political Justice*, though my thoughts and feelings, after this period, have been more painful, anxious and vivid—more inclined to action and less to theory. Before I was a republican: Athens appeared to me the model of governments; but afterwards, Athens bore in my mind the same relation to perfection that Great Britain did to Athens.

I fear that I am wanting in that mild and equable benevolence concerning which you question me; still I flatter myself that I improve; at all events, I have willingness, and 'desire never fails to generate capacity'. My knowledge of the chivalric age is small: do not conceive that I intend it to remain so. During my existence, I have incessantly speculated, thought, and read. A great deal of this labour has been uselessly directed; still I am willing to hope that some portion of the stores thus improvidently accumulated, will turn to account. I have just finished reading *La Système de la Nature*, par M. Mirabaud. Do you know the real author? It appears to me a work of uncommon powers.

I write this to you by return of post, solicitous, as quickly as possible, to reassure you of my fidelity and truth. I will soon write one more at length, and with answers more satisfactory to the questions in the latter part of yours.

Believe me, with sincerest respect,

Yours most truly,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

CWM-RHAYADER, *June 11, 1812.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I will no longer delay returning my grateful and cordial acknowledgments for your inestimable letter of March 30. That it is most affectionate and kind, I deeply feel and thankfully confess. I can return no other answer, than that I will become all that you believe and wish me to be. I should regard it as my greatest glory, should I be judged worthy to solace your declining years ; it is a pleasure, the realization of which I anticipate with confident hopes, and which it shall be my study to deserve. I will endeavour to subdue the impatience of my nature, so incompatible with true benevolence.

I know, that genuine philanthropy does not permit its votaries to relax, even when hope appears to languish, or to indulge bitterness of feeling against the very worst, the most mistaken of men.

To these faults in a considerable degree I plead guilty ; at all events, I have now a stimulus adequate to excite me to the conquest of them.

I yet know little of the chivalric age. The ancient romances in which are depicted the manners of those times, never fell in my way. I have read Southey's *Amadis of Gaul* and *Palmerin of England*, but at a time when I was little disposed to philosophize on the manners they describe. I have also read his *Chronicle of the Cid*. It is written in a simple and impressive style, and surprised me by the extent of accurate reading evinced by the references. But I read it hastily, and it did not please me, so much as it will on a reperusal, seasoned by your authority and opinion. It requires no great study to attain an intimate knowledge of Grecian and Roman history ; it requires but common feeling to appreciate and acknowledge the resplendent virtues with which it is replete. The first doubts, which arise in boyish minds concerning the genuine-

ness of the Christian religion, as a revelation from the divinity, are often excited by a contemplation of the virtues and genius of Greece and Rome. Shall Socrates and Cicero perish, whilst the meanest hind of modern England inherits eternal life ?

I mean not to affirm, that this is the first argument, with which I would combat the delusions of superstition ; but it certainly was one of the first that operated to convince men, that they were delusions. What do you think of Eaton's trial and sentence ? I mean not to insinuate that this poor bookseller has any characteristics in common with Socrates, or Jesus Christ, still the spirit which pillories and imprisons him, is the same which brought them to an untimely end—still, even in this enlightened age, the moralist and reformer may expect coercion analogous to that used with the humble yet zealous imitator of their endeavours. I have thought of addressing the public on the subject, and indeed have begun an outline of the address. May I be favoured with your remarks on it before I send it to the world ?

We are unexpectedly compelled to quit Nantgwilt. I hope, however, before long time has elapsed, to find a home. These accidents are unavoidable to a minor. I hope wherever we are, you, Mrs. Godwin, and your children will come this summer.

I do not suppose we shall remain here longer than a week. All letters directed here will securely and certainly be forwarded. Harriet desires to join me in everything, that is respectful and affectionate to yourself, Mrs. G., and family, my venerated friend. Believe me to remain yours most sincerely,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

CHAPTER XVIII

ON the 11th of June, 1812, they were settled in Radnorshire ; but on the 5th of July the young rovers showed themselves in North Devon, at Lymouth, near Barnstaple : how they got there I know not. Four letters, that alone remain of the correspondence with William Godwin, supply whatever can

be learned of the transactions of this period, and suggest a few remarks. It had apparently been settled in London, that they were to take the cottage of a certain Mr. Eton, a friend of Mrs. Godwin, at Lymouth. A cottage in a region so remote perhaps was not easily to be disposed of, and they probably, according to their accustomed tenure, were to remain there for ever ; to hold the undesirable cottage in fee-farm. With this arrangement they did not comply, and their wilful neglect seems to have given offence to the authorities in Skinner Street, for the 'venerated friend' was more angry than one would expect so great a philosopher could be about so small a matter. Inasmuch as, if his pupil thought that he could promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number more effectually in a spacious mansion where there was more elbow-room than in citizen Eton's narrow house, where the progress of perfectibility would have been cramped and hampered, surely he was fully justified by the eternal fitness of things in choosing the former. Thus, for once at least, there was a collision between the unreal of poetry and the cant of philosophy ; if the consequences of the accident were severe, they were not fatal ; even Mr. Eton himself, although much hurt, survived the concussion. It rather looks as if it had been proposed to them, possibly by some of the enlightened females, whose friendship they had so precipitately sought, to journey from Rhayader to Lymouth on purpose to occupy the charming cottage ; that to the first part of this reasonable proposal their complying natures yielded, and the long journey was actually performed, but that they had contumaciously refused to take the cottage, because it would not contain them.

Shelley writes : ' I am, as you know, a minor, and as such depend upon a limited income, 400*l.* per annum, allowed by my relatives. Upon this income justice and humanity have many claims'.

If it be correct, which is doubtful, that he had an income of 400*l.* a year—200*l.* from his own father, and the like sum from Harriet's father—and it was paid regularly, the allowance, although moderate, would have been sufficient for his unostentatious, unpretending style of living, if the greater part had not been wasted on travelling expenses, and in costly flittings. The only claim that justice and humanity could possibly have upon so narrow a stipend, a strong claim no doubt, was that the recipient should live within his income, and not exceed his scanty means.

This claim poor Bysshe did not, and could not, comprehend, and there was no judicious friend at hand to undertake for him the important duty of answering it by prudence, frugality, and economy. The high and sole function of the Guardian Angel was to keep up by continual friction the due activity of the electric fluid in her rich, black hair. No domestic animal ; no cat, white-mouse, or canary bird ; not even the nymph Egeria, herself, was so thoroughly ignorant of and unskilled in housewifery, as the good Harriet. The queer people, with whom Bysshe inconsiderately connected himself, so far from assisting him in this great object by temperate advice and prudent example, were, for the most part, as irregular as himself, and moreover were animated by a common and eager desire to prey upon him to the utmost.

He writes, ' I might, it is true, raise money on my prospects, but the percentage is so enormous, that it is with extreme unwillingness I should have recourse to a step, which I might then be induced to repeat, even to a ruinous frequency and extent. The involvement of my patrimony would interfere with schemes, on which it is my fondest delight to speculate '.

As a part only of the correspondence remains, it is impossible to conjecture to what proposal, or suggestion, this passage may refer.

He says, that Lymouth is a beautiful place, a lovely solitude ; that myrtles of an immense size twine up our cottage. It is only up the imagination of a poet, that the myrtle ever twines. He often expressed to me the most lively admiration of the Valley of Rocks near Ilfracombe ; and this is all that he ever divulged respecting his residence at Lymouth ; and this picturesque valley made an indelible impression upon his memory. It was not less lasting than forcible, for during the whole of his too brief life, even until its disastrous and too early termination, it was his habit frequently to sketch, or scrawl, almost unconsciously with his pen upon the fly-leaves of books, on the backs of letters, and in note-books, and occasionally even upon the wall, or wainscot, points, spires, and pinnacles of rocks and crags, as recollections and memorials of the fascinating spot. Specimens of his rude art still remain, and are cherished : as well as all other traces, however faint, of his frail and fugitive existence, which the Divine Poet left behind him on his abrupt and rough translation from a hard and unfeeling world !

LYMOUTH, BARNSTAPLE, *July 5, 1812.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I write to acknowledge the pleasure I anticipate in the perusal of some letters from you and yours, which have not yet reached us. The post comes to Lymouth but twice in a week, and some allowance is to be made for the casualties which attend an event by which we have been unexpectedly unsettled. We were all so much prepossessed in favour of Mr. Eton's house, that nothing but the invincible objection of scarcity of room would have induced us, even after seeing it, to resign the pre-determination we had formed of taking it. We now reside in a small cottage, but the poverty and humbleness of the apartments is compensated for by their number, and we can invite our friends with a consciousness, that there is enclosed space, wherein they may sleep, which was not to be found at Mr. Eton's. I will, in the absence of other topics, explain to you my reason for fixing upon this residence. I am, as you know, a minor, and as such depend upon a limited income (400*l.* per annum) allowed by my relatives. Upon this income justice and humanity have many claims, and the necessary expenses of existing in conformity to some habitudes—which may be said to be interwoven with our being—dissipate the remainder. I might, it is true, raise money on my prospects, but the percentage is so enormous that it is with extreme unwillingness I should have recourse to a step, which I might then be induced to repeat, even to a ruinous frequency and extent. The involvement of my patrimony would interfere with schemes on which it is my fondest delight to speculate. I may truly, therefore, be classed generically with those minors who pant for twenty-one, though I trust that the specific difference is very, very wide. The expenses incurred by the failure of our attempt, in settling at Nantgwilt, have rendered it necessary for us to settle for a time in some cheap residence, in order to recover our pecuniary independence. I will still hope that you and your estimable family will, before much time has elapsed, become inmates of our house. This house boasts not such accommodations as I should feel satisfied in offering you, but I will propose a plan which, if it meets your approbation, may prove an interlude to our meeting, and become an earnest that much time will not elapse before its occurrence. I have a friend ; but first I will make you in some measure acquainted with her. She is a woman with whom her excellent qualities

made me acquainted. Though deriving her birth from a very humble source, she contracted, during youth, a very deep and refined habit of thinking ; her mind, naturally inquisitive and penetrating, overstepped the bounds of prejudice, she formed for herself an unbeaten path of life.

By the patronage of a lady, whose liberality of mind is singular, this woman at the age of twenty was enabled to commence the conduct of a school. She concealed not the uncommon modes of thinking, which she had adopted, and publicly instructed youth as a Deist and a Republican. When I first knew her, she had not read *Political Justice*, yet her life appeared to me in a great degree modelled upon its precepts. Such is the woman, who is about to become an inmate of our family. She will pass through London, and I shall take the liberty of introducing to you one whom I do not consider unworthy of the advantage. As soon as we recover our financial liberty, we mean to come to London. Why may not Fanny come to Lymouth with her and return with us all to London in the autumn ? I entreat you to look with a favourable eye upon this request, and indeed our hearts long for a personal intercourse with those to whom they are devoted ; yet I fear, from the tenor of Mrs. G.'s letter, that we must give up the hope of seeing you. This disappointed hope determines us to journey to London *as soon as we can*. This place is beautiful, it equals—Harriet says it exceeds—Nantgwilt. Mountains certainly of not less perpendicular elevation than 1,000 feet are broken abruptly into valleys of indescribable fertility and grandeur. The climate is so mild, that myrtles of an immense size twine up our cottage, and roses blow in the open air in winter. In addition to these is the sea, which dashes against a rocky and caverned shore, presenting an ever-changing view. All 'shows of sky and earth, of sea and valley', are here. Adieu ! Believe how devotedly and sincerely I must now remain yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

I write this letter by return of post, and send purposely to Barnstaple. I have *more* to say, but will reserve it until I receive the letters which are on the way.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

LYMOUTH, *July 7, 1812.*

MY DEAR SIR,

The person whom I sent yesterday to the post-town

has returned. He brought those letters from you and yours, which have been forwarded from Cwm Elan to Chepstow.

It is a singular coincidence, that in my last letter I entered into details respecting my mode of life, and unfolded to you the reasons by which I was induced, on being disappointed in Mr. Eton's house, to seek an unexpensive retirement. I feel my heart throb exultingly when, as I read the misgivings of your mind concerning my rectitude, I reflect that I have to a certain degree refuted them by anticipation. My letter, dated the 5th, will prove to you that it is not to live in splendour, which I hate—*not* to accumulate indulgences, which I despise, that my present conduct was adopted. Most unworthy, indeed, should I be of that high destiny which he, who is your friend and pupil, must share, if I was not myself practically a proselyte to that doctrine, by promulgating which with unremitting zeal and industry I have become the object of hatred and suspicion.

Our *cottage*—for such, not nominally, but really, it is—exceeds not in its accommodations the dwellings of the peasantry which surround it. Its beds are of the plainest, I may say the coarsest materials, and from the single consideration, that accommodations for personal convenience were glaringly defective, did I refrain in my last letter from pressing the request, whose concession is nearest to my desires, that *you* would come to this lovely solitude, and bring to a conclusion that state of acquaintance which stands between us, to a *perfect* intimacy. I was beginning a sentence in the middle of the second page of my letter, in which I should have pressed you to come *here*, when Harriet interrupted me, bade me consider that your health was delicate, that our rooms were complete *servants' rooms*. I finished the sentence, as it stands. She added, that we would hasten our journey to London, and that *you all* should live with us. It was the thought of the moment ; I send it you without comment, as it arose. See my defence. Yet, my esteemed and venerated friend, accept my thanks—consider yourself as yet more beloved by me, for the manner in which you have reproved my suppositionary errors ; and ever may you, like the tenderest and wisest of parents, be on the watch to detect those traits of vice which, yet undiscovered, are nevertheless marked on the tablet of my character, so that I pursue undeviatingly the path which you first cleared through the wilderness of life.

I said, in my last letter, that there are certain habitudes in

conformity to which it is almost necessary that persons, who have contracted them, should exist. By this I do not mean that a splendid mansion, or an equipage, is in any degree essential to life ; but that if I was employed at the loom, or the plough, and my wife in culinary business and housewifery, we should, in the present state of society, quickly become very different beings, and, I may add, less useful to our species. Nor, consistently with invincible ideas of delicacy, can two persons of opposite sexes, unconnected by certain ties, sleep in the same apartment. Probably, in a regenerated state of society, agriculture and manufacture would be compatible with the most powerful intellect and most polished manners—probably delicacy, as it relates to sexual distinction, would disappear—yet now, a plough-boy can with difficulty acquire refinement of intellect ; and promiscuous sexual intercourse, under the present system of thinking, would inevitably lead to consequences the most injurious to the happiness of mankind. Mr. Eton's house had not sufficient bed-rooms, *scarcely* sufficient for ourselves, and you and your family must sleep, for, my dear friend, believe me that I would not willingly take a house for any time, whither you could not come. Have I written desultorily ? Is my explanation of habitudes incorrect, or indistinct ? Pardon me, for I am anxious to lose no time in communicating my sentiments.

Harriet is writing to Fanny ; if she is particular in her invitation of Fanny, it is not meant exclusively. There are a sufficient quantity of bed-rooms, and if the humbleness of their quality is no objection, I need not say—Come, thou venerated and excellent friend, and make us happy.—Adieu !

Believe me, with the utmost sincerity and truth,

Ever yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

(Single sheet.) To Mr. William Godwin, London.

MY DEAR SHELLEY,

Our acquaintance is a whimsical, and, to a certain degree, anomalous one. I have never seen your face,

Your face, my Thane, is as a book, where men
May read strange matters,

and till I have seen a man's face, I may say, in good sooth, I do not know him. Would that this whimsical and anomalous state of our acquaintance were brought to a conclusion !

A A

Deprived, therefore, as I have hitherto been, of the legitimate way of reading your character, and diving into your heart, I am reduced to collect traits of your character, one by one, as I can, as they offer themselves in your correspondence. I am half afraid I have got a glimpse of a new one—that, perhaps, I may not altogether approve—this day :

The postman this morning brought a letter, directed to Mr. Eton, at Mrs. Godwin's. The circumstance was an awkward one. Our family have been taught by yourself and Mrs. Shelley to be anxious about the place where you shall fix your abode. The moment what I may now call the well-known hand was seen, all the females were on the tiptoe to know.

Well ! Do they take this nice cottage, near Tintern Abbey and Piercefield ? It seemed idle, too, that we should be kept in ignorance of your determination. There could, I thought, be no secrets between you and Mr. Eton. I therefore ventured to open the letter. Mrs. Godwin will write a line to Mr. Eton in the course of the day, telling him that you decline his house, I am a little astonished, however, with the expression in your letter, that 'the insufficiency of house-room is a vital objection'. This would sound well to Mr. Eton from the eldest son of a gentleman of Sussex, with an ample fortune. But to me, I own, it a little alarms me. Observe, however, that I know nothing of Mr. Eton's house. It may be of the dimension of a pig-sty ; nor is it my habit to reason directly to a particular case : the bent of my mind's eye is always to a general principle.

One thing more, by way of preliminary. You love *frankness*, and you honour *me* ; but when this frankness proceeds to unreserve and uncereceremoniousness in my person, will you bear that ?

Your family consists of yourself, a very young wife, and a sister. Yourself, as I conceived, a plain philosophical republican, loving your species very much, and caring very little for the accumulation of personal indulgences—Tell me, how much of truth there is in this picture ?

The Enquiry concerning Political Justice may, unknown to me, be a mass of false principles and erroneous conclusions ; to me it appears otherwise : there is one principle that lies at the basis of that book : 'I am bound to employ my talents, my understanding, my strength, and my time, for the production of the greatest quantity of general good. I have no

right to dispose of a shilling of my property at the suggestion of my caprice'. There is no principle, as it appears to me, more fundamental to a just morality than this last. Not only property and money are most essential for promoting the good of others ; but he that misuses these undermines all the good qualities he might otherwise have. He may say, indeed, he will employ his faculties and efforts for the general good, but if in the meantime he lives, like a farmer-general, he is a wofully deficient character. The very act of having no conscience in the expenditure of his money, and pampering all his whims, will corrupt his understanding and taint his benevolence. It is in this point of view that the Apostle says well, ' He that offends in one point is guilty in all '.

But you, my dear Shelley, have special motives for wariness in this matter. You are at variance with your father, and I think you say in one of your letters, that he allows you only 200*l.* a year. If by unnecessary and unconscientious expense you heap up embarrassments at present, how much do you think that will embitter your days and shackle your powers hereafter ? I wish to see you a free man, when you shall come of age, and when, at whatever time that may arrive, you shall be the minister, in the name and on the behalf of your species, of a considerable property. Prudence, too, a just and virtuous prudence, in this most essential point, the dispensation of property, will do much to make you and your father friends ; and why should you not be friends ?

Forgive the freedom of this expostulation : you must see, that I am not playing the part of a peevish and presumptuous censor, but endeavouring to revive in you, if they need to be revived, great principles, without which a man can never be a worthy, a meritorious member of the great commonwealth of mankind.

Believe me, my dear Shelley, with the warmest wishes for your prosperity and happiness, your sincere friend,

W. GODWIN.

LYMOUTH, *July* 29, 1812.

MY DEAR GODWIN,

I have never seen you, and yet I think, I know you ; I think I knew you even before I ever heard from you, whilst yet it was a question with me, whether you were living or dead. It has appeared to me, that there are lineaments in the soul, as well as in the face ; lineaments, too, less equivocal

and deceptive, than those which result from mere physical organization. This opinion may be illusory ; if I find it so, it shall be retracted. You say, three letters of yours have been unanswered. I waited to know, whether those of mine contained any topics worthy of notice, or discussion. I find they do not ; therefore, let us pass on.

To begin with Helvetius. I have read *Le Système de la Nature*, and suspect this to be Helvetius's by your charges against it. It is a book of uncommon powers, yet too obnoxious to accusations of sensuality and selfishness. Although, like you, an irreconcilable enemy to the system of self-love, both from a feeling of its deformity and a conviction of its falsehood, I can by no means conceive how the loftiest disinterestedness is incompatible with the strictest materialism. In fact the doctrine, which affirms that there is no such thing as matter, and that which affirms that all is matter, appear to me perfectly indifferent in the question between benevolence and self-love. I cannot see how they interfere with each other, or why the two doctrines of materialism and disinterestedness cannot be held in one mind as independently of each other, as the two truths, that a cricket-ball is round and a box square. Immateriality seems to me nothing but a simple denial of the presence of matter, of the presence of all the forms of being with which our senses are acquainted, and it surely is somewhat inconsistent to assign real existence to what is a mere negation of all that actual world to which our senses introduce us.

I have read Berkeley, and the perusal of his arguments tended more than anything to convince me, that immaterialism, and other words of general usage, deriving all their force from mere predicates in *non*, were invented by the pride of philosophers to conceal their ignorance, even from themselves. If I err in what I say, or if I differ from you, though in this point I think I do not, reason stands arbiter between us. Reason, if I may be permitted to personify it, is as much your superior, as you are mine. An hour and a thousand years are equally incommensurate with eternity. With respect to Helvetius's opinion to the omnipotence of education, *there* I submit to your authority, because authority, derived from experience such as yours, is reason. I will own, that the opinion of Helvetius, until very lately, has been mine.

You know that in most points I agree with you. As I see you in *Political Justice*, I agree with you. Your *Enquirer* is

replete with speculations, in which I sympathize, yet the arguments there in favour of classical learning failed to remove all my doubts on that point. I am not sufficiently vain and dogmatical to say that *now* I have *no* doubts on the deleteriousness of classical education ; but it certainly is my opinion—nor has your last letter sufficed to refute it—that the evils of acquiring Greek and Latin considerably overbalance the benefit. But why, because I think so, should it even be supposed necessary by you to warn me against fearing that *you feel displeasure*. Assure yourself that the picture of you in the retina of my intellect is a standing proof to me, that its original is capable of extending to opinions the most unlimited toleration, and that he will scan with disgust nothing but a defect of the heart. Let Reason, then, be arbiter between us. Yet sometimes I am struck with dismay when I consider that, placed where you are, high up on the craggy mountain of knowledge, you will scarcely condescend to doubt, even sufficiently for the purposes of discussion, that opinion which you hold, although by that doubting you might fit me for following your footsteps. Yet I will explain my reasons for doubting the efficacy of classical learning as a means of forwarding the interests of the human race.

In the first place, I do not perceive how one of the truths of *Political Justice* rests on the excellence of ancient literature. That Latin and Greek have contributed to form your character it were idle to dispute, but in how great a degree have they contributed ? Are not the reasonings on which your system is founded utterly distinct from and unconnected with the excellence of Greece and Rome ? Was not the government of republican Rome, and most of those of Greece, as oppressive and arbitrary, as liberal of encouragement to monopoly, as that of Great Britain is at present ? And what do we learn from their poets ? As you have yourself acknowledged somewhere, 'they are fit for nothing but the perpetuation of the noxious race of heroes in the world'. Lucretius forms, perhaps, the single exception. Throughout the whole of their literature runs a vein of thought similar to that, which you have so justly censured in Helvetius. Honour—and the opinion either of contemporaries, or more frequently of posterity—is set so much above virtue as, according to the last words of Brutus, to make it nothing but an empty name. Their politics sprang from the same narrow and corrupted source. Witness the interminable aggressions between each

other of the states of Greece ; the thirst of conquest with which even republican Rome desolated the earth—they are our masters in politics, because we are so immoral as to prefer self-interest to virtue, and expediency to positive good. You say that words will neither debauch our understandings, nor distort our moral feelings. You say that the time of youth could not be better employed than in the acquisition of classical learning. But *words* are the very things that so eminently contribute to the growth and establishment of prejudice : the learning of *words* before the mind is capable of attaching correspondent ideas to them, is like possessing machinery with the use of which we are so unacquainted as to be in danger of misusing it. But words are merely signs of ideas. How many evils, and how great evils, spring from annexing inadequate and improper ideas to words ! The words honour, virtue, duty, goodness, are examples of this remark. Besides, we only want one distinct sign for one idea. Do you not think that there is much more danger of our wanting ideas for the signs of them already made, than of our wanting these signs for inexpressible ideas ? I should think that natural philosophy, medicine, astronomy, and, above all, history, could be sufficient employments for immaturity ; employments which would completely fill up the era of tutelage, and render unnecessary all expedients for losing time well by gaining it safely.

Of the Latin language, as a grammar, I think highly. It is a key to the European languages, and we can hardly be said to know our own without first attaining a complete knowledge of it. Still, I cannot help considering it as an affair of minor importance, inasmuch as the science of things is superior to the science of words. Nor can I help considering the vindicators of ancient learning—I except you, not from politeness, but because you, unlike them, are willing to subject your opinions to reason—as the vindicators of a literary despotism ; as the tracers of a circle which is intended to shut out from real knowledge, and to which this fictitious knowledge is attached, all who do not breathe the air of prejudice, or who will not support the established systems of politics, religion, and morals. I have as great a contempt for Cobbett as you can have, but it is because he is a dastard and a time-server ; has no humanity, no refinement ; but were he a classical scholar, would he have more ? Did Greek and Roman literature refine the soul of Johnson ? Does it extend the views of

the thousand narrow bigots educated in the very bosom of classicality ? But

in publica commoda peccem
Si longo sermone morer tua tempora,

says Horace at the commencement of his longest letter.

Well, adieu ! All join in kindest love to your amiable family, of whom I have forgotten to speak, but not to think ; and I remain,

Very truly and affectionately yours,
P. B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. W. Godwin, London.

CHAPTER XIX

SHELLEY'S last extant letter to William Godwin from Lymouth is dated the 29th of July. I have two other letters from Lymouth, the last bears date the 18th of August. These are addressed to a person in London, who was possibly an acquaintance of his wife's family, but not, I believe, of himself at that time. They do not furnish any picture of his mode of life, and are not, therefore, of any particular interest ; but the statement of a few facts is not unworthy of notice.

Bysshe writes on the 29th of July, that he had just printed, in London, his letter concerning the trial of D. I. Eaton (of which hereafter) for private distribution, but that he did not intend to publish it. He says—' I have several works, some unfinished, some yet only in contemplation. They are principally in the form of poems, or essays '. And he requests, that Milton's *Prose Works*, Sir Humphrey Davy's *Elements of Chemical Philosophy*, Hartley on Man, and *The Rights of Woman* by Mary Wolstonecraft, may be sent to him immediately.

In his letter of the 18th of August to the same person he writes thus—' I have procured a copy of a work from America. It develops the actual state of republicanized Ireland, and it appears to me to be above all things calculated to remove the prejudices, which have been too long cherished, of that oppressed country, and to strike the oppressors with dismay. I enclose also two pamphlets which I printed and distributed

whilst in Ireland some months ago, no bookseller daring to publish them ; they were on that account attended with only partial success'. It would have been more correct and more candid to have said, that the pamphlets had no success in Dublin. 'I shall, if possible, prepare a volume of Essays, moral and religious, by November ; but all my MSS. now being in Dublin, and from peculiar circumstances not immediately obtainable, I do not know whether I can. I enclose also, by way of specimen, all that I have written of a little poem, begun since my arrival in England ; I conceive I have matter enough for six more cantos. You will perceive I have not attempted to temper my constitutional enthusiasm in that poem. Indeed a poem is safe ; an iron-souled prosecutor would scarcely dare to attack "genus irritabile vatum". The past, the present, and the future are the grand and comprehensive topics of this poem. I have not yet half exhausted the second of them'. He says, that he had read *The Empire of the Nairs*, by the Chevalier Lawrence, and also the prolusions of some other liberal philosophers of the day ; and the letter concludes with these words—'I am about translating an *old* French work, professedly by a M. Mirabaud, not the famous one, *Le Système de la Nature*. Do you know anything of it ?'

This projected translation was not completed, probably it was never commenced ; the System of Nature was hardly of sufficient standing to be styled 'an *old* French work'. The inchoate poem, of which a specimen was enclosed, is believed to have been the celebrated Queen Mab of the Divine Poet.

The ordinary fate of Shelley's writings was much like that of the Sibylline leaves ; they were blown about, at the mercy of every wind, into holes and corners the most remote and devious. His MSS. not immediately obtainable, but from which in three short months a volume of moral and religious Essays was to proceed, he had, under peculiar circumstances, left behind him in Dublin.

Similar was the fortune of his letters ; these he often either lost himself soon after they were written, or caused others to lose for him. How large and how charming a volume would those letters alone compose, which he wrote to myself and I never received !

So was it also with his books. A large share of his scanty income, amounting in the whole to a considerable sum during some fifteen years that he was constantly a purchaser, was always expended upon books ; so that, wherever he happened to

be, he was commonly in possession of a tolerable library, comprising several choice works. I used to think him extremely lucky in buying books, for he frequently picked up a rare and valuable author at a very moderate price ; or, to do him justice, I should perhaps rather say, that he was active, observant, and intelligent in such purchases, as he was in all other matters.

When he changed his residence, and he often changed it—too often, indeed—he hastily chose some new domicile. where he resolved to remain ‘for ever’ ; thither his books were at once despatched, but with a so wild a precipitance, and such head-long hurry, that ancients and moderns alike missed their way. And when he, on the spur of the moment, quitted his eternal abode, as he was wont, the books were left behind to follow him to his lately elected and perpetual home : but they sometimes remained unheeded.

He had a good library expecting his return in a cottage at Killarney ; and at I know not how many other places in the British Isles, and in other states of Europe. I have many times thought, what an excellent collection of valuable books the poor poet would have owned, if all his different libraries, scattered about in distant localities, had been brought together under one roof and in one large room.

To lend Bysshe a book was to bid it a long farewell, to take leave of it for ever ; and, indeed, the pain of parting was often spared, for he bore away silently, reading it as he went, any work that caught his attention.

I have always possessed many books, the true riches of a scholar, and I have felt a certain weakness towards them ; but if my books were dear to me, my incomparable friend was far dearer ; he was most welcome, and more than welcome, to them, as to all besides, that I ever had : yet I have now and then permitted myself to regret, that he had deprived me of some favourite volume, only that he might presently lose it.

How much longer than the 18th of August, the date of the last remaining letter from Lymouth, the juvenile party tarried there in their sweet seclusion, is not known ; nor why, or how, they left that remote retirement, or whither they betook themselves. It should seem that they departed very abruptly, after their fashion, and without communicating their hasty determination even to those favoured persons who were at that period in the fullest enjoyment of their entire confidence, such as it was, to the ‘venerated friend and his amiable family’ ; inasmuch as William Godwin himself, as I discovered

casually some years afterwards, for the lesion of philosophy was too cruel ever to be alluded to by any of the parties concerned, was hoaxed and regularly bitten in a most provoking and truly laughable manner. By dint of urgent and often reiterated invitations, he was at last persuaded and pressed into the service ; and he made up his mind to pay a visit to his unseen, unknown friend, his affectionate, obedient, admiring, and devoted pupil ; to try his fortune in Devonshire, and to take pot-luck at Lymouth.

Rashly relying on their assurances, and looking forward confidently to a warm reception, to be heartily welcomed and made perfectly comfortable, he took an inside place by the coach to Barnstaple. The reverend Mentor entrusted himself and his old-fashioned portmanteau to the heavy, lumbering vehicle, slowly rolled onwards towards the west of England, and after a long and tedious journey, he came at last to Lymouth, wearied and exhausted, poor man, but full of good hopes of finding at once rest, refreshment, and rapturous sympathy.

The worn-out patriarch of modern philosophy, to his no small astonishment and utter dismay, found, that the house was shut up and the birds flown ; his most addicted disciples had taken themselves off suddenly, and no man knew whither. There were no tidings, no traces, of their route ! Nothing was left for him but to return to Skinner Street by the way he came ; but this could not be effected every day. Twice, or at the most, thrice, in the week did the six-inside coach plough its reluctant course to town. The bewildered author of the *Essay on Sepulchres* secured his seat, and reposed himself at his own charge in the inn, pondering in unphilosophical, unpoetic, unenviable loneliness how he might reconcile such flighty proceedings with the great social principles laid down so plainly in his immortal *Enquiry concerning Political Justice* ; and drawing up, for the instruction of his amiable family on his return, a verbal process of the astounding neglect which he had experienced.

It would have been curious and amusing to have listened to the narrative of the disappointed and bubbled traveller giving the details of this specimen of human perfectibility. In addition so his other annoyances, it was related that the much enduring man, relying upon the liberality of his devoted admirers, had not brought with him sufficient funds to take him home again, and therefore he found himself short of money in a land of strangers.

It is necessary to return to myself for a little while, and briefly to tell the simple story of my own uniform life, in order to follow the tangled thread of the Divine Poet's multiform and ever varying existence.

When my young friends betook themselves so hastily to Keswick, they left me behind at York, as has been already related ; and I incurred their displeasure, to a certain extent, by refusing to join them, notwithstanding their repeated and importunate solicitations. It was on all accounts inexpedient, and indeed impossible, to relinquish my professional education. After they quitted Cumberland, I received no more letters, and I did not know how to address them. Both Bysshe and Harriet wrote to me from Ireland, and also from Wales, as I was afterwards informed ; but not one of their letters came into my hands. I led a quiet, regular life, in the quiet old city, punctually attending the chambers of my worthy conveyancer every day, and remaining with him until the hour of dinner, six o'clock, when the place was shut up, there being no attendance in the evening. I drew whatever was required to be drawn by me—marriage settlements, mortgages, wills, agreements, and the various deeds by which land is transferred, with dull, vulgar, and tiresome prolixity. I copied a thick volume in quarto of precedents, and I read the works, for the most part confused and ill-written, in which a branch of the law of England, certainly not extensive, nor indeed difficult in itself, is rendered perplexed, and sometimes unintelligible. The most profound ignorance is the specific difference, and the grand, unenviable distinction of the English lawyer—an animal too often drawn from the dregs of society—and the place of the real property lawyer, is commonly at the bottom of this low scale. The conveyancer is usually some damaged article—not merely a vessel of dishonour, moulded out of the coarsest clay into the rudest and most awkward form, but a piece spoiled in baking besides—a cracked pitcher, deformed in person and disfigured, ridiculous through an impediment in his speech, or by some broad provincial dialect, hardly to be understood by hedgers and ditchers ; too vulgar for any judicial appointment, and moreover a rip, found on trial not to be respectable enough for an attorney. Hence arises the pernicious ascendancy—the omnipotence, in truth—of low connections and low arts, and the absolute impossibility, so long as this state of things continues, of a thorough reform of the law, and of the mode of transfer of real property in England. A scholar and

a gentleman would be the master of his clients, and would be able to overrule and to silence all futile and interested objections to perspicuity and simplicity in dealings with land ; but a mean and ignorant fellow must of necessity be the very humble servant and slave of the attorneys, who, in consideration of his entire and devoted subserviency, are pleased to give him business and bread ; and to keep him out of the stone-yard and from the road-side, for which a wise Providence originally designed him.

I commonly gave up my evenings to humanizing studies ; to the advancement of my general education, which had been so rudely, illegally, and insolently interrupted by the petty despots of my University. I had brought my books with me from Oxford, and I went through several Greek and Latin authors with careful and scrupulous attention.

Sometimes, however, I partook of the kind hospitality of the good-natured and sociable inhabitants of the ancient city. On Sunday, when the day was not unfavourable, I bestowed a thought on my health, and I kept up my natural vigour by stretching out boldly across the fine plain, which encompasses York on all sides, and accomplishing on foot, a round of twenty, or thirty miles. In addition to the most salutary effects of robust exercise, the exertions of an attentive observer are usually rewarded by some object worthy of his notice ; he sees some uncommon plant, or bird, or insect, and there are few old churches, however humble, which do not afford some interesting peculiarity of structure, or some memorial of past ages.

Having completed my proposed residence of a year in York, and taken the first step in my professional education, I removed to London. I entered as a student in the Middle Temple, and was doomed to eat in the noble Hall, but happily during term only, that is to say, for about a third part of the year, bad dinners in worse company. There were a few young men amongst my fellow-students, whose society was not displeasing, and we contrived to dine at the same table. This desirable object was effected by coming into the hall betimes, and performing certain ceremonies, the precise nature of which I have forgotten ; sticking forks into pieces of bread, I think, was the principal charm. By such means we succeeded in keeping at a distance the future occupants of high legal offices ; creatures stinking with filthy odours, stinking with vulgarity, and in every respect unfit to associate with

gentlemen. These, the coming ornaments of the legal profession, all young men who had been decently brought up shunned as a pestilence. Rare Ben Jonson, some two centuries ago, dedicated *Every Man out of his Humour* 'to the noblest nurseries of humanity and liberty in the kingdom, the Inns of Court'.

Nobody, nowadays, has a good word for these places; they must take a new start, or be sold up. Moreover, on my arrival in London, I enlisted with a special pleader, and fought manfully under his inky banners. In some respects this study, or rather this vulgar and barbarous praxis, resembled the pursuits of the preceding year, in others it was widely different. Before, we had been drowsy, and well nigh asleep; now, we were always in a hurry; this seemed still more preposterous, and certainly less gentlemanlike, than the lethargy of the former year. Dispatch was prayed—earnestly prayed—most earnestly prayed. When can I have it? The question had never been asked at York! At first, I believe, I was one of two pupils, but shortly I became one of six. We were all persons of good principles, high tories—the master and his disciples, with the exception of one man, who sometimes made a noise on behalf of Sir Francis Burdett, the most successful performer of the day in his particular line; having stated his thesis to us, the obstreperous young patriot supported it by the best arguments that can be used on that side of the question—by whistling and singing the popular tunes of the French revolution, and beating time on his desk with a ruler. We thought the noisy champion of freedom a very foolish fellow, and such indeed he was; and eventually even his friend, Sir Francis, left him in the lurch, and came over to our party, turning into a fine old English gentleman, like ourselves. At the chambers of a special pleader, a greater amount of attendance was required than with a conveyancer; it was necessary to go thither after dinner, and sometimes to remain late; at least in and about term, that is for half the year, or more; and in fact the evening was the busiest part of the day. I attended very closely during the three years assigned to this state of pupilage. I drew a prodigious mass of pleadings, and copied many thick volumes of precedents, and read many treatises and reports; the employment was sufficiently dull and unintellectual, and there was no lack of tautology, but in this respect pleadings did not equal the uncouth and barbarous tautology of deeds.

The odious and stupid slavery, and perverse and absurd mode of learning common law, consumed in a miserable manner nearly the whole of my time, leaving but little for amusement, and, what I deeply deplored, for more humane studies. Nevertheless, I contrived to visit the theatres occasionally, to go sometimes into society, and to set apart a few hours for the classical authors of Greece and Rome ; there are refreshment and relaxation in a change of studies.

A residence in London became soon exceedingly agreeable to me, and it has always been so ; a spare hour may be employed with pleasure and profit in a capital city ; in the country and in a provincial town there are not equal facilities for making leisure fruitful. Access may readily be obtained to books and other aids to learning, which are not approachable elsewhere ; and it is possible to cultivate the acquaintance of men of accomplishments and acquirements, and to associate with persons of both sexes distinguished by various talents. The long vacation notwithstanding was an invaluable relief, a complete renovation, the germ of a new life ; to visit the country during the pleasantest part of the year—the autumn—to ride, to shoot, to study, at entire ease, and according to one's good pleasure, was a delightful change ; to burn many pounds of powder, and to read many goodly volumes of Greek.

I had returned from the country at the end of October, 1812, and had resumed the duties of a pleader ; I was sitting in my quiet lodgings with my tea and a book before me : it was one evening at the beginning of November, probably about ten o'clock. I was roused by a violent knocking at the street door, as if the watchman was giving the alarm of fire ; some one ran furiously upstairs, the door flew open, and Bysshe rushed into the middle of the room. I had not seen him for a year ; not since they left me at York. I had not heard from him, nor indeed any tidings of him, for many months ; not once after his departure from Keswick. I made several fruitless attempts to find out what had become of him soon after I came to reside in London the last spring.

The civil and obliging Mr. Graham had unfortunately quitted his lodgings, and the people could not tell me where he was ; he could have given me at once the information, which I so ardently desired. I called in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and I saw the elder of the cousins, the younger and more communicative one had gone to Edinburgh to study medicine.

I had a very cold reception ; of Bysshe he either knew, or chose to know, nothing.

It was evident there was a screw loose ; he gave me no encouragement to call again, nothing, it was plain, was to be made of him, and I have never seen him since.

From this untoward sample it was conspicuously of no use to address myself to any other members of his family, or to their agents ; the poor Poet was a prohibited book, closely sealed up and put away to be out of sight, and indeed out of mind. There was nothing to be done but to draw pleas, to keep terms, and to bide my time.

The time had now come suddenly and unexpectedly. Bysshe looked, as he always looked, wild, intellectual, unearthly ; like a spirit that had just descended from the sky ; like a demon risen at that moment out of the ground.

How had he found me out ? I could never have discovered his hiding-place ; in truth I had often tried in vain. He knew of my intention to become a law-student ; he had been at the Treasury in Lincoln's Inn ; they sent him to the Temple. I had dined that day in the Hall of the Middle Temple, and from thence they dispatched him to my special pleader, and he, with considerable hesitation, gave him my address.

The next morning this gentleman said to me, not without a certain trepidation :

' You had just left chambers last night, when a very wild-looking man came here, and asked for you—he must see you instantly. He was in a great hurry ; he must see you. He required your address ; I doubted, whether I ought to give it him, for he would not tell me his name. Leave your own name and a written direction ; Mr. Hogg will be here in the morning, he will see it, and if he pleases, he can call upon you ; but he would not agree to this : he must see you immediately. My clerk thought, that in a frequented part of London there could not be much danger, so I permitted him, though rather unwillingly, to write down your lodgings, and at last I gave it him. Did you see him ? I hope he did not do you any harm'.

Bysshe did not approve of the caution of the prudent pleader ; next day, when I told him of his suspicions, he exclaimed, ' Like all lawyers, he is a narrow-minded fool ! How can you bear the society of such a wretch ? The old fellow looked at me, as if he thought I was going to cut his throat ; the clerk was rather better, but he is an ass ! ' He

had ten thousand things to tell me, and as he told me a thousand at least of them at a time without order, and with his natural vehemence and volubility, I got only a very indistinct notion of his history during the preceding year ; I picked up a few facts afterwards, many more very recently, but even at this moment I can trace only an imperfect narrative of this portion of his life. I learned that he had been in Ireland, in Wales, and in other places ; that was nearly all which I could then make out. He eagerly asked me innumerable questions, but he seldom heard, or waited for, my answers. He was soon coming to reside in London—to stay there ‘for ever’ ; so we should never be separated again. He stayed late, and would have remained conversing with me all night, but I took him by the arm, and led him downstairs and into the street, that the people of the house, who began to show their uneasiness, might go to bed ; for my landlord was a judge’s clerk, and kept good hours. I promised at parting to dine with him the next day. I should see Harriet, who had much to tell me.

Accordingly, on the morrow at six o’clock, in some hotel very near to St. James’s Palace, I found in a sitting-room high up in the house Eliza, who smiled faintly upon me in silence, and Harriet, who received me cordially and with much shaking of hands. ‘It really seemed as if we were never to meet more ! What a separation ! But it will never occur again, for we are coming to live in London’.

‘You are looking surprising well, Harriet !’ And so she was, and in the full bloom of radiant health.

‘Oh no, poor dear thing’, said Eliza, feebly, ‘her nerves are in a fearful state ; most dreadfully shattered’.

I took a seat, and conversed a little while with the bright and nervous beauty. Harriet then produced a large sheet of thick paper, printed on one side only, and with an engraving at the top, much like an Oxford Almanack, and handed it to me with a certain unction, as if it were something sacred and full of edification. I looked at it in a cursory way. The letterpress was a report of the trial of Robert Emmett ; the engraving represented a court of justice with the usual accompaniments. The principal figure was the unfortunate young man ; he was standing at the bar and addressing the bench, vainly endeavouring to charm two deaf adders, Baron George and Baron Daly, and to persuade them to feel commiseration for, if not sympathy with, high treason. When I had looked at the paper a short time, the good Harriet asked me, not

without emotion, 'Well, what do you think? Do not you pity him? Poor young man!'—'Not the least in the world!' 'What do you think of it?' The paper was filled for the most part with the speech of the prisoner. I had read formerly a fuller report of Emmett's trial. 'I think the sooner all such rascals are hanged the better!' Eliza eyed me with calm contempt, with mute languid disgust.

'Yes, it is just like you!' Harriet ejaculated. 'You are so horribly narrow-minded! So terribly unfeeling!'

Presently Bysshe came thundering upstairs from the street, like a cannon-ball, and we had dinner. After dinner the Poet spoke of Wales with enthusiasm. I was to come and see it. He talked rapturously of the waterfalls, walking about the room and gesticulating as he described them. What effect they had upon him when they were actually present before his eyes I know not; the recollection of them absent filled him with wonder and ecstasy in St. James's Street. Soon after tea Eliza said, they must go and pack up; they were to set out for Wales early next morning, and she trembled for poor dear Harriet's nerves!

A few shabby, ill-printed books, productions of the Irish press, were lying about the room; they treated of the history of Ireland, and of the affairs of that country. Bysshe did not say a word about Ireland; on the contrary, when I took up an ill-favoured volume, and remarked, what a shockingly printed book, it is hardly legible; he gently drew it out of my hands, closed it, and laid it aside. He spoke on two subjects only; his project to come and reside in London, when we should be always with each other, and should read together every book that was ever written by man; and about the Welsh waterfalls, which I was soon to visit in company with him; and some day we must take a look at the falls of Niagara. The lovely Eliza in her languishing manner whispered to her sister, that a certain Mrs. Madocks was a most delightful creature; and she had named in the course of the evening, more than once, with faint rapture, some Mr. Madocks, as the benefactor of the human species. Bysshe also informed me in confidence, that Mr. Madocks, of Tremadoc, was the true Prince of Wales, being the lineal descendant and heir-at-law of that Prince Madoc, who had been immortalized in a never-dying epic by the immortal Robert Southey. No doubt the worthy squire by genealogical syllogisms might easily be proved to be Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall, and Earl of

Chester, and Duke of York to boot: this would be but a modest and moderate assumption in a Welsh pedigree. My friends loved mysteries which were never worth penetrating; farthing secrets not of sufficient importance for finding out. I learned subsequently what was the meaning of all this. The true nature of the transaction will be explained most readily by a letter, which has been put into my hands lately, addressed by Shelley to an attorney in Wales, the agent of Mr. Madocks.

In the brief interval between quitting Lymouth and his sudden apparition in the Treasury at Lincoln's Inn, he had become acquainted with a company of projectors and speculators; at what place, or in what way he came to know them, I never heard. He fell at once into their schemes after his manner, and with a zeal far too hot to hold. It does not appear whether he had engaged in actual personal canvass for the Tremadoc people in Sussex, as his letter might imply, or had written sundry epistles on their behalf, and had received cold answers; or, as is most probable, he had, in virtue of his former experience of the men of his native county, set them down for 'cold, selfish, calculating animals', who reckoned it better to spend their money at home in the purchase of Sussex dumplings, in eating, drinking, and sleeping, than in embanking against the sea in a corner of some Welsh county.

The Duke of Norfolk, I was informed, politely answered the request for pecuniary assistance, and regretted that he had no funds at his immediate disposal, which most likely was true; but their inference was not so; that if he had a large sum of money in hand, he would have placed it instantly at the disposal of that most delightful creature, Mrs. Madocks, for the sake of her lovely friend's glossy black hair.

The attempt is said to have been a noble one; and for a thing of the kind, probably it was very good. Some four or five thousand acres of fertile land were to be gained from the sea, which were to be let at forty shillings an acre, and would have produced an income of from eight to ten thousand pounds a-year; the newly created town of Tremadoc would have been greatly benefited, as well as the neighbourhood, and a road on the top of the embankment would have united two counties of Wales, and would have shortened considerably the journey from Dublin to London and Bath: the last advantage perhaps is a doubtful one, for there are quite as many Irishmen in London and Bath as are wanted. The whole was to have been effected at the estimated cost of

twenty thousand pounds. All this would have been very good for the people in that remote angle of North Wales, and particularly for Mr. Madocks himself; but it is not easy to see what the worthy inhabitants of the Rapes of Sussex had to do with the scheme, what profit they were to derive from it, or why Bysshe should write about it in such rapturous strains; why so much 'unabated and unconquerable ardour' should be kindled by one of the pecuniary speculations of a very active and sanguine speculator; what better feelings the Duke of Norfolk could have relative to this sea-wall; why it was 'our country's cause'; how it could rationally excite 'fond hopes, ardent desires, unremitting personal exertions in a cause, which I will desert but with my life!' This surely is the poetry of engineering! A civil engineer must be inspired to write thus.

ST. JAMES'S COFFEE-HOUSE, Nov. 7, 1812.

MY DEAR WILLIAMS,

I received your long and kind letter, and although press of business does not permit me to answer to its length, I do hope that it may not be deficient in kindness. I need not assure you of the pleasure which I receive from the intelligence of the safety and success of the embankment, of the honourable perseverance of the men, or your own good hopes and spirits. You know my feelings on all these things. I have too often expressed my unabated and unconquerable ardour for the success of you and your enterprises to need repetition now.

On Thursday next we set out for Tanyrallt, and expect to be with you on the ensuing Monday. The Duke of Norfolk has just returned to London. I shall call upon him this morning, and shall spare no pains in engaging his interest, or perhaps his better feelings, in our and our country's cause.

I see no hope of effecting, on my part, any grand or decisive scheme until the expiration of my minority. In Sussex I meet with no encouragement. They are a parcel of cold, selfish, and calculating animals, who seem to have no other aim or business, on earth, but to eat, drink, and sleep; but in the meanwhile my fervid hopes, my ardent desires, my unremitting personal exertions (so far as my health will allow), are all engaged in that cause, which I will desert *but with my life*. Can you hire a trustworthy maid-servant, as we shall

require three in all? Believe me, I feel the attention of the Nanney family very deeply.

Harriet is now writing to Mrs. M., to express her sense of her kindness. I do think that your country owes more than I can express to the disinterestedness and activity of that administration.

Harriet and the ladies unite with me in sincerest best wishes, and believe me,

Your true friend,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

P.S.—I am much better than when you last saw me. If I can find time to-day, I shall write to the Doctor. Mr. Bedwell will settle the 70*l.* affair.

The date of a letter shows, that on the 3rd of December, 1812, Shelley was residing, probably with three trustworthy maid-servants, at Tanyrallt, near Tremadoc, in a cottage, or country house, the property of Mr. Madocks. The letter shows also that he was already getting tired, if not of the embankment, at least of the distant and inconvenient locality, and of his unenlightened neighbours.

'My parcel of books', he writes, 'is not yet arrived. I own I am rather anxious concerning it, as the irregularity of the coaches in this solitude among mountains frequently causes mistakes. The verses which I have lately read are accurately descriptive of the exquisite souls by whom I am encompassed. Bigotry is so universally pervading, that the best are deeply tainted. I was speaking of your friend to a lady, who knew him during his residence in Wales. In many respects she is a woman of considerable merit, and, except in religious matters, a model of toleration. "Oh!" she said, "there he lived in a cottage near T——, associating with no one, and hiding his head, like a murderer, and", she added, altering her voice to a tone of appropriate gravity, "he was worse than that, he was a sceptic!" I exclaimed much against the intolerance of her remark, without producing the slightest effect. She knows very well that I am a democrat; but perhaps she does not do me justice! There is more philosophy in one square inch of any tradesman's counter, than in the whole of Cambria. It is the last stronghold of the most vulgar and commonplace prejudices of aristocracy. Lawyers of unexampled villainy rule and grind the poor,

whilst they cheat the rich. The peasants are mere serfs, and are fed and lodged worse than pigs. The gentry have all the ferocity and despotism of the ancient barons, without their dignity and chivalric disdain of shame and danger. The poor are as abject as slaves, and the rich as tyrannical as bashaws'.

In another letter from Tanyrallt, in Carnarvonshire, of the 17th of December, Bysshe says :

'I am preparing a volume of minor poems, respecting the publication of which I shall request the judgment both of a publisher and a friend. A very obvious question would be Will they sell, or not ? Subjoined is a list of books, which I wish you to send to me very soon. I am determined to apply myself to a study that is hateful and disgusting to my very soul, but which is above all studies necessary to him who would be listened to as a mender of antiquated abuses—I mean, that record of crimes and miseries—history. You see that the metaphysical works, after which my heart hankers, are not numerous. In this list, one thing will you take care of for me, that the standard and reputable works on history, etc., be of the cheapest possible editions ; with respect to the metaphysical works, I am less scrupulous. Spinoza you may, or may not, be able to obtain. Kant is translated into Latin by some Englishman'.

Bysshe did not begin to learn the German language until the year 1815.

'I would prefer that the Greek Classics should have Latin, or English translations printed opposite ; if they are not to be obtained thus, they must be sent otherwise. Mrs. Shelley is attacking Latin with considerable resolution, and can already read many odes in Horace'.

There follows, by way of postscript, a long list of standard historical works, a few on physics and metaphysics, and four venerated names, Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Plutarch, 'with translations in Latin or English subjoined. To these, which will take some stiff reading, you may add anything new, that you conceive of sufficient worth'. On the shortest day, the 21st of December, he writes to London for 'Marcus Antoninus, Seneca, and Plato ; the last author with a translation'.

It did not transpire, whether Shelley had any personal interview with William Godwin during his brief visit to London in November ; the proceedings of my friend were shrouded in

his habitual mystery, and his hasty and devious footsteps seldom left any traces behind him; it was not otherwise, than if he had been walking upon the surface of the sea. According to ordinary rules, one would infer that Bysshe called upon him, and offered some explanation, or apology, for having left his visitor so strangely in the lurch at Lymouth. But an inspired poet is not governed by ordinary rules, and there is no indication in William Godwin's letter of their having as yet met. Possibly the flight from Lymouth was too outrageous a slight to be expiated by an early exposition of motives face to face with a lover of wisdom for its own sake, however meek and mild he might be. It is certain, that William Godwin had no large sums of money at his disposal, wherewith the favourite speculation of the moment might have been aided, nor was he an adept in the science of banking out the sea, so that in the present emergency his counsels would have availed little. Besides, a permanent residence in London was then contemplated as being about to commence immediately, and personal acquaintance might naturally and conveniently be postponed until a frequent and familiar intercourse might be carried on without interruption.

William Godwin's letter to Shelley is dated the 10th of December, 1812. It treats of the study of history; and although the latter part is wanting, the fragment is of considerable length, and therefore it must be passed over, at least, for the present. Nevertheless, it is worthy of attention; of more attention than the young historical student appears to have bestowed upon it, whose reading was not influenced in any the smallest degree by advice humbly and urgently demanded.

The year 1813 opens at Tanyralit with this extract from a letter of the 2nd of January:

'On reflection, I feel rather chagrined that I excepted against the *Georgics*. I fear it may withhold your hand, when you would otherwise send me some really valuable work. I assure you I am quite reconciled to Professor Martyn. Harriet will probably derive some assistance from his translation, when she has mastered Horace. Now to answer your questions. The *Tractatus Polemicopoliticus* and the *Opera Posthuma* of Spinoza will fully suffice, at least, for the present. With regard to Kant, there is a work of his, and, as I judged, the only one, which has been translated into Latin by some Doctor. This, which is his most celebrated work, is the

only one I require; and I have no choice between a Latin, a French, and an English translation. My poems will, I fear, stand the criticism even of friendship; some of the latter ones have the merit of conveying a meaning in every word, and all are faithful pictures of my feelings at the time of writing them. But they are, in a great measure, abrupt and obscure—all breathing hatred of despotism and bigotry; but, I think, not too openly for publication. One fault they are indisputably exempt from, that of being a volume of fashionable literature. I doubt not but some friendly hand will clip the wings of my Pegasus considerably. Small Christmas, or Easter, Offerings of a neat little book have frequently a surprising effect. The Emperors of China seem to form a singular exception to the usual doltishness of the regal race. I sympathize with his Imperial Majesty'.

What this compliment to the Emperor of China relates to does not appear.

'Harriet, her sister, and myself hope to see some of our friends here early in the spring'.

The early spring will speak for itself, and will tell its own tale. On the 26th of January, he writes from Tanyrallt, Tremadoc.

'The thermometer is twelve degrees below freezing; this is Russian cold! I am provoked by the stupidity of the people who were to send the box, etc., etc.'

But on the manifold inconveniences of a residence in the wilderness it is needless to expatiate.

'I certainly wish to have all Kant's works. My question concerning the *Encyclopédie* was more of curiosity than want'.

This kind of liberal curiosity may be easily gratified in London, but not at Tremadoc.

'I expect to have *Queen Mab* and the other poems finished by March. *Queen Mab* will be in ten cantos, and will contain about 2,800 lines; the other poems contain probably as much more. The notes to *Queen Mab* will be long and philosophical; I shall take that opportunity, which I judge to be a safe one, of submitting for public discussion principles of reformation, which I decline to do syllogistically in the poem. A poem very didactic is, I think, very stupid. I do not think that Sir William Drummond's arguments have much weight. His *Œdipus Judaicus* has completely failed in making me a convert'.

To proceed with the extracts from Shelley's letters. He writes thus from Wales on the 19th of February :

' You would very much oblige me if you would collect all possible documents on the Precèssion of the Equinoxes, as also anything that may throw light upon the question of, whether or not the position of the Earth on its poles is not yearly becoming less oblique. It is an astronomical affair '. His attention had probably been called to equinoctial considerations by Sir William Drummond and other writers of the same stamp ; however this might be, the astronomical affair and the extensive commission to which it gave occasion, would certainly puzzle the brains of a correspondent as far advanced in astronomy, as a Carnarvonshire squire.

Dry Drummond's *Ædipus* is altogether unreadable ; but Volney's *Ruins* was one of Harriet's text-books, which she used to read aloud for our instruction and edification.

' Queen Mab,' he continues, ' is finished and transcribed. I am now preparing the notes, which shall be very long and philosophical. It will be received with the other poems ; ' I should think, that the whole should form one volume : but of that we can speak hereafter. As to the *French Encyclopédie*, it is a book, which I am desirous, very desirous, of possessing. And if I could get a few months' credit (being present rather low in cash), I should very much desire to have it. How long will the poems be printing after they have been received ? '

' Excuse the earnestness of the first part of my letter. I feel warmly on this subject, and I flatter myself, that so long as your own independence and liberty remain uncompromised, you are inclined to second my desires '.

Of the earnestness which he seeks to excuse, the first sentence of the letter will afford a specimen : ' I am boiling with indignation at the horrible injustice and tyranny of the sentence pronounced on the editor of the *Examiner* and his brother ; and it is on this subject that I write to you. Surely the seal of abjectness and slavery is indelibly stamped upon the character of England '.

After a further display of very excusable earnestness, he proposes that a public subscription to pay the fine imposed be set on foot, and with this unbounded, and too often inconsiderate, liberality, he sends twenty pounds as his own contribution, should the project be adopted.

A pert journalist had presumed to call a very important

personage 'a Adonis of sixty', and had even ventured to charge him with being 'fat'; whereas the Adonis was disposed to sink his age, and to esteem his figure as eminently correct, and in its fulness graceful. The author lying always under the stern necessity of saying something every week to the purpose, if possible, and relevant to the passing concerns of the day, or at all events of saying something to fill up his paper; in addition to the imputation of corpulency with its attendant jests, had discoursed of the ordinary topics of censure, which in those times were thought to be intimately connected with the name of that personage. He might never be mentioned indeed by his former adherents without some reference to these; without reiterating the old complaint, that the monarch had turned the tables and his own back, a broad fat back it was affirmed to be in this instance, upon the associates and bottle-holders of the heir-apparent. In this respect the article complained of had not gone, it was freely acknowledged, beyond the proper limits of sound Whig doctrines, and constitutional scurrility; but it had pronounced him to be a fat old man. This was saucy, and peculiarly offensive to a ruler, who was resolved to be still reputed a slim slender-waisted youth.

It might well be, that the personal ridicule was reprehensible to a certain extent, but most assuredly it was foolish to be so deeply offended at it. It was childish to own so much displeasure, and preposterous to file a criminal information in such a case. It is hard to believe, that a public prosecutor could have been found indiscreet enough to disgrace himself and his office by taking up seriously so absurd a matter—to comprehend, how the defence could have been so conducted, and a jury packed, so that a verdict of guilty could have been procured. A fine of fifty pounds imposed upon the convicted defendants, or a month's imprisonment, would have been a moderate and sufficient punishment; a mark of disapprobation fully adequate to the offence, such as it was. A fine of one thousand pounds, and the incarceration of two persons for two years, appeared to be a measure of outrageous and stolid vengeance, too insane to be awarded by the slowest of judges, and of too manifest and patent a tendency to bring the administration of criminal justice into utter and universal contempt.

It is said to be a question of what wood Mercuries ought to be made; but there could be no question, after this frantic

sentence, whether successful advocates, who had turned trading politicians, were the proper material out of which to construct a bench of judges. Moreover, it seems quite incredible, that the royal prerogative of mercy did not interpose to remedy the wrong, and to soothe the shocked and irritated feelings of the public, by remitting the greater part of the monstrous punishment.

The libel possibly was blameable ; the prosecution, the persecution, and rigorous condemnation were altogether indefensible. However, it was a paltry, pitiful affair on both sides, and in every point of view. It was party spite against party spite, and nothing more. It was in its origin and nature an attempt to annoy political opponents ; and in its results the insulting aggressors, political assailants, had the worst of it. Consequently there was nothing in the transaction to cause indignation, a virtuous indignation, to boil over. A lower temperature, than 212°, on a philosopher's thermometer would have indicated warmth of displeasure equal to censure adequately the injustice and tyranny of an improper and impolitic severity. The fancy of a sensitive, imaginative young poet surely runs riot, when he writes to his correspondent of 'the great debt of obligation, which the people of England owe to a good, brave, enlightened man, to the champion of their liberties and virtues, which if they hesitate to pay, they are dead, cold, stony-hearted, and insensible, and brutalized by centuries of unremitting bondage. The great debt being in truth, that the champion of liberty and virtue had called somebody, or other, 'a fat Adonis of sixty', in order that he might sell his journal, divert his readers, and please the political adventurers of his own party, who might, or might not, feel themselves bound in gratitude to stand by him, to compensate his losses and sufferings, and to be substantially thankful for having afforded them so good a grievance, as the severe sentence, which sent him, for his impertinence, to tarry an unreasonably long time in a prison in Horsemonger Lane. But a scholar, a poet and a gentleman should scorn such trash ; he ought not to be caught by so poor a bait.

A strange epistle, of which a copy in Mrs. Shelley's writing has lately been placed in my hands, may be conveniently introduced and noticed in this place, as being connected with the subject, although it was written two years before, during our residence at Oxford.

What the triumph, so highly prized by men of liberality, on the occasion of which his sincerest congratulations were offered, really was, does not appear, not is it material to inquire. It was probably some success of journalism, in truth interesting only to journalists ; to 'the fearless enlighteners of the public mind', as they are laughably, but not ironically styled. However, it is unnecessary to discuss such lofty themes. The letter is curious, because it presents one of the very few instances in which he appeared to have contemplated the contingency of sitting in parliament. He commonly shrank with dismay and horror from every proposal of that kind, when it was made to him by his father and other members of his family, or by the Duke of Norfolk. But I apprehend, that he contemplated it only for a moment, during the brief dream, in which he penned this fanciful and whimsical effusion ; this vision of want of judgment. The Abbé Barruel's *History of Jacobinism* was a favourite book at college, he went through the four volumes again and again, swallowing with eager credulity the fictions and exaggerations of that readily believing, or readily inventing author. He used to read aloud to me with rapturous enthusiasm the wondrous tales of German Illuminati ; and he was disappointed, sometimes even displeased, when I expressed doubt or disbelief.

The staple end of the letter of the 2nd of March is some crude notion of applying the machinery of Illuminism to establish on a firm basis the rational liberty of the press ; or perhaps the unrestrained licence of flippant journalism. The same letter also illustrates in a striking manner Bysshe's perilous propensity, by writing to them with effusion, of making the acquaintance of persons of some notoriety, but of whose character and habits of life he knew nothing whatever.

His introduction of himself to William Godwin, a remarkable example of this very unusual course of proceeding, has been already fully detailed. This practice surely is imprudent and improper ; it is certainly unnecessary, for it is always easy to be personally presented, or made known by letter, through the intervention of a common acquaintance. Besides, there is something ridiculous in so abrupt and hasty a step ; it too nearly resembles dealing through an advertisement in the *Times*.

Wanted a good, plain cook ; or housekeeper to a single gentleman—wanted a philosopher ; a profound one, who is a

friend to liberty, will be preferred. If any fearless enlightener of the public mind will apply at the butter shop, he will hear of something to his advantage.

The truth is, my poor friend knew well that it was quite wrong, because he never communicated his intentions to myself, or to any of his friends; he never told me what he had done, being unquestionably ashamed of his precipitancy; he never showed me the letter, or the answer to it, if he ever received one. Now for the letter, which I never read until very recently.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD, *March 2, 1811.*

SIR,

Permit me, although a stranger, to offer my sincerest congratulations on the occasion of that triumph so highly to be prized by men of liberality; permit me also to submit to your consideration, as one of the most fearless enlighteners of the public mind at the present time, a scheme of mutual safety and mutual indemnification for men of public spirit and principle, which if carried into effect, would evidently be productive of incalculable advantages: of the scheme the following is an address to the public, the proposal for a meeting, and it shall be modified according to your judgment, if you will do me the honour to consider the point.

The ultimate intention of my aim is to induce a meeting of such enlightened and unprejudiced members of the community, whose independent principles expose them to evils which might thus become alleviated; and to form a methodical society, which should be organized so as to resist the coalition of the enemies of liberty, which at present renders any expression of opinion on matters of policy dangerous to individuals. It has been for want of societies of this nature, that corruption has attained the height at which we now behold it; nor can any of us bear in mind the very great influence, which some years since was gained by *Illuminism*, without considering, that a society of equal extent might establish national liberty on as firm a basis, as that which would have supported the visionary schemes of a completely equalized community.

Although perfectly unacquainted with you privately, I address you as a common friend to *liberty*, thinking that in cases of this urgency and importance, etiquette ought not to stand in the way of usefulness.

My father is in parliament, and on attaining twenty-one, I

shall in all probability fill his vacant seat. On account of the responsibility, to which my residence in the University subjects me, I, of course, dare not publicly avow all I think, but the time will come, when I hope, that my every endeavour, insufficient as this may be, will be directed to the advancement of liberty.

I remain, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Leigh Hunt.

In the course of the winter, 1812-1813, I received several letters from my young friends at Tanyrallt.

I have found three from Bysshe; they are most interesting. I present them together, being unwilling to interrupt the series of extracts from his communications with other correspondents.

TANYRALLT, *Dec.* 3, 1812.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter begins with the Duke of Norfolk. I stared, when I saw his name; from the very moment I parted from you to the moment of the receipt of your letter, I had thought no more of the Duke of Norfolk than of the man in the moon. I will this instant sit down, and do penance for my involuntary crime by writing a long and wheedling letter to his Grace, and you shall be duly informed of the success of the experiment. I have no hopes, however, of bending my father, but by the mere force of gross interest, and therefore suppose it equally impossible, that he should come to terms before I am of age, as that he should hold out at the expiration of my minority. Be it as it may, I will give him a fair chance, I will put on my most good-humoured and conciliatory countenance, which Heaven knows, will in this case have something of the Grimgriffinhoff in it after all. When I see him, though I shall say the civilest things imaginable, yet I shall not look as if I liked him, because I do not like him.

You think, that, because your reasonings on the subject of moral and political science have led you wide of me, you are regarded by me with less complacency; but good intention is the essence of merit, and any qualification so involuntary as belief, or opinion, is surely a defective standard, by which

to measure out esteem. It is only when conviction is influenced by debasing and unworthy motives, that it becomes in any degree criminal.

Of such motives I do not accuse you, and you appear tainted with some portion of that illiberality, of which you indirectly accuse me, by the very spirit of suspicion, which produces that accusation.

You misinterpret my feelings on the state of the moral world, when you suppose that the bigotry of commonplace republicanism, or the violence of faction, enters into them at all.

I certainly am a very resolved republican (if the word applies), and a determined sceptic ; but although I think their reasonings very defective, I am clearly aware that the noblest feelings might conduct some few reflecting minds to Aristocracy and Episcopacy. Hume certainly was an aristocrat, and Locke was a zealous Christian.

The Brown Demon, as we call our late tormentor and school-mistress, must receive her stipend. I pay it with a heavy heart and an unwilling hand ; but it must be so. She was deprived by our misjudging haste of a situation, where she was going on smoothly : and now she says, that her reputation is gone, her health ruined, her peace of mind destroyed by my barbarity ; a complete victim to all the woes mental and bodily, that heroine ever suffered ! This is not all fact ; but certainly she is embarrassed and poor, and we being in some degree the cause, we ought to obviate it. She is an artful, superficial, ugly, hermaphroditical beast of a woman, and my astonishment at my fatuity, inconsistency, and bad taste was never so great, as after living four months with her as an inmate. What would Hell be, were such a woman in Heaven ?

The society in Wales is very stupid. They are all aristocrats and saints : but that, I tell you, I do not mind in the least : the unpleasant part of the business is, that they hunt people to death, who are not so likewise.

Miss Westbrook is perfectly well ; Harriet unites with me in wishing you all possible good, and I am your very sincere friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

Write soon, for your letters amuse us ALL.

To T. J. H.

TANYRALLT, *Dec. 27, 1812.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter to Harriet contains some hints of the possibility of your being at leisure in a short time. I sincerely hope that your schemes will allow a visit to Tanyrallt. The advantage of a mail within seventeen miles would entirely obviate any hitch in the affair. We all anxiously wish you would come, and hope that your hint was something better than a mere lure for the opportunity of refusal.

We are all surprised at the complaints of cold which issue from London. For a day or two, indeed, it bit a little in the first of the morning, but nothing more.

Believe me that I sympathize in your feelings on Buonaparte and Peace, very warmly. Buonaparte is a person to whom I have a very great objection; he is to me a hateful and despicable being. He is seduced by the grossest and most vulgar ambition into actions which only differ from those of pirates by virtue of the number of men and the variety of resources under his command. His talents appear to me altogether contemptible and commonplace; incapable as he is of comparing connectedly the most obvious propositions, or relishing any pleasure truly enrapturing. Excepting Lord Castlereagh, you could not have mentioned any character but Buonaparte whom I condemn and abhor more vehemently. With respect to those victories in the North; if they tend towards peace, they are good; if otherwise, they are bad. This is the standard by which I shall ultimately measure my approbation of them. At the same time, I cannot but say that the first impression which they made on me was one of horror and regret.

Brougham's defence was certainly not so good as it might have been; it was fettered by the place wherein he stood. Entire liberty of speech was denied. He could not speak treason; he could not commit a libel; and therefore his client was not to be defended on the basis of moral truth. He was compelled to hesitate when truth was rising to his lips; he could utter that which he did utter only by circumlocution and irony. The speech of the Solicitor-General appeared to me the consummation of all shameless insolence, and the address of Lord Ellenborough so barefaced a piece of time-servingness, that I am sure his heart must have laughed at his lips as he pronounced it.

I have as yet received no answer from the Duke of Norfolk.

I scarcely expect one. I do not see that it is the interest of my father to come to terms during my non-age ; perhaps even not after. Do you know, I cannot prevail upon myself to care much about it. Harriet is very happy as we are ; and I am very happy. I question if intimacy with my relations would add at all to our tranquillity. They would be plotting and playing the devil, or showing us to some people who would do so ; or they would be dull ; or they would take stupid likes or dislikes, and they certainly might cramp our liberty of movement. In fact, I have written to the Duke. I can say to my conscience, ' I have done my best ' ; but I shall not be very unhappy, if I fail.

I continue vegetable ; Harriet means to be slightly animal, until the arrival of Spring. My health is much improved by it ; though partly perhaps by my removal from your nerve-racking and spirit-quelling metropolis.

We are divided between two opinions : Whether you really will allow us the heartfelt pleasure of seeing you here this winter : or whether your suggestion was a quiz.

My dear friend, I remain,

Yours very affectionately,
PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H.

TANYRALLT, *Feb. 7, 1813.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have been teased to death for the last fortnight. Had you known the variety of the discomfitures I have undergone, you would attribute my silence to anything but unkindness or neglect. I allude to the embankment affairs, in which I thoughtlessly engaged ; for when I come home to Harriet, I am the happiest of the happy. I forget whether I have expressed to you the pleasure which you know I must feel at your visit in March. I hope it will be early in the month, and that you will arrange matters so in London, that it may be protracted to the utmost possible length.

We simple people live here in a cottage extensive and tasty enough for the villa of an Italian Prince. The rent, as you may conceive, is large, but it is an object with us that they allow it to remain unpaid till I am of age.

What said Harriet of America ?

You must take your place in the mail as far as Capel Cerrig, and inform me of the time you mean to be there, and I will

meet you. I do not think that you have ever visited this part of North Wales. The scenery is more strikingly grand in the way from Capel Cerrig to our house than ever I beheld. The road passes at the foot of Snowdon ; all around you see lofty mountain peaks, lifting their summits far above the clouds, wildly wooded valleys below, and dark tarns reflecting every tint and shape of the scenery above them. The roads are tremendously rough ; I shall bring a horse for you, as you will then be better able to see the country than when jumbled in a chaise.

Mab has gone on but slowly, although she is nearly finished. They have teased me out of all poetry. With some restrictions, I have taken your advice, though I have not been able to bring myself to rhyme. The didactic is in blank heroic verse, and the descriptive in blank lyrical measure. If an authority is of any weight in support of this singularity, Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, the Greek Choruses, and (you will laugh) Southey's *Thalaba* may be adduced. I have seen your last letter to Harriet. She will answer it by next post. I need not say that your letters delight me, but all your principles do not. The species of pride which you love to encourage appears to me incapable of bearing the test of reason. Now, do not tell me that Reason is a cold and insensible arbiter. Reason is only an assemblage of our better feelings—passion considered under a peculiar mode of its operation. This chivalric pride, although of excellent use in an age of Vandalism and brutality, is unworthy of the nineteenth century. A more elevated spirit has begun to diffuse itself, which, without deducting from the warmth of love, or the constancy of friendship, reconciles all private feelings to public utility, and scarce suffers true Passion and true Reason to continue at war. Pride mistakes a desire of being esteemed for that of being really estimable. I scarce think that the mock humility of ecclesiastical hypocrisy is more degrading and blind. I remember when over our Oxford fire we used to discuss various subjects ; fancy me present with you in spirit, and own ' how vain is human pride ! ' Perhaps you will say that my Republicanism is proud ; it certainly is far removed from pot-house democracy, and knows with what smile to hear the servile applauses of an inconsistent mob. But though its cheeks could feel without a blush the hand of insult strike, its soul would shrink neither from the scaffold nor the stake, nor from those deeds and habits which are obnoxious to slaves in power.

My Republicanism, it is true, would bear with an aristocracy of chivalry and refinement before an aristocracy of commerce and vulgarity ; not, however, from pride, but because the one I consider as approaching most nearly to what man ought to be. So much for Pride !

Since I wrote the above, I have finished the rough sketch of my poem. As I have not abated an iota of the infidelity or cosmopolity of it, sufficient will remain, exclusively of innumerable faults, invisible to partial eyes, to make it very unpopular. Like all egotists, I shall console myself with what I may call, if I please, the suffrages of the chosen few, who can think and feel, or of those friends whose personal partialities may blind them to all defects. I mean to subjoin copious philosophical notes.

Harriet has a bold scheme of writing you a Latin letter. If you have an Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, she will thank you to bring it. I do not teach her grammatically, but by the less laborious method of teaching her the English of Latin words, intending afterwards to give her a general idea of grammar. She unites with me in all kindest wishes.

To T. J. H.

CHAPTER XX

I HAD promised to visit my young friends in their wilderness during the Spring Circuit ; that is to say, at the beginning of March ; in about a month from the date of Bysshe's last letter. It would have been a great pleasure to have met again ; to have spent a few pleasant weeks with them ; to have seen the famous embankment, and all the other wonders of nature and art, and to have examined in a course of long walks, in company with my friend, that part of the Principality, an interesting tract of country which I had never set eyes upon. This project was rudely and abruptly put an end to by a very remarkable incident, if incident it may be called. Although I had known Bysshe intimately for three or four years, I could still be surprised, and I was not a little surprised by a letter which I received one morning from Harriet. Frolicsome fairies, evil-disposed elves, spiteful spirits, and daring demons have been in all times the torment of the milkmaid, the miner, the husbandman ; no calling, no trade, no mystery, no occupation has been exempt from their malignant

influence and mischievous interference ; even the quiet pursuits of the recluse student are not privileged or protected from præternatural intromission and disturbance. I have occupied the same dingy chambers in the Temple for some fifty years, and during the lapse of half a century countless letters and papers of various kinds have been received and suffered to accumulate there. Such of them as related to matters of business were classed and tied up in bundles, and arranged under their proper heads ; but those which concerned private friendships and domestic affairs merely were put away without order and indiscriminately, as soon as each had been read and answered, where an answer was required ; and they have rarely been referred to subsequently, or disturbed. In locked drawers, desks, and closets, every letter, every scrap of paper, although covered thickly with dust and soot, and in utter confusion, must remain, a vast, rude, and undigested mass ; but still it must be in existence, and on a diligent search should undoubtedly be forthcoming. But it is not so ; far otherwise ! When I undertook to write the life of my incomparable friend, my first care was to collect materials for the task. Accordingly, I spent several long and laborious days in the painful office, painful in every way, of looking over my ample collections, and selecting from my several repositories whatever had any reference to the subject. I never had such dirty hands, or went through so filthy a job, as when I made the retrospect of my past life. Besides, it was far too like the proceedings of the Day of Judgment—of the great and terrible day, when the secrets of all hearts will be revealed—to be perfectly agreeable. Unavailing and painful regrets ; the revival of distressing, but forgotten, occurrences ; afflicting and mortifying recollections—a fresh flood of the ebbd waters of a wide sea of troubles. All this and more might have been borne, and indeed was borne, but the harvest ought to have been as abundant as the toils of the labourer were heavy ; the crop disappointed me. The Cobbold had been there before me ; it seemed that the tiny subjects of Queen Mab had prevented me ; that they had previously rifled my long-neglected hoards. Shelley printed books that they might be pirated mercilessly ; he gave copies of them to his friends, or reserved them for himself, that they might be borrowed without notice, and never to be returned ; in one word—stolen. Everything referring in any way to him, not under lock and key, was accounted derelict ; it

became the property of the first occupant, until he also should be stripped of it in turn: whatever had his mark upon it was outlawed—it bore a wolf's head! Of this ban I was fully sensible; I had long felt the full weight of it; and therefore I had been the more careful jealously to secure my stores, to keep them in thick darkness and secrecy. It is impossible to believe that anything has been actually lost; but certainly there are many things upon which I am unable at present to lay my hand. Hereafter, doubtless, they will turn up. The inconvenience is only temporary, but it is considerable. Some things I am unwilling to state, not having my vouchers by me; other things, probably, I have forgotten, but may hope some day, on recovering my papers, to be reminded of them, and that my memory will thus be refreshed. I have an uncertain, obscure, hazy recollection of having separated, many years ago, Harriet's letters from the others; for what purpose I do not remember—this is of little moment—neither can I remember where I deposited them, which is most unfortunate.

It has been stated confidently, that Harriet Shelley always spelt her name Harriett, with a double (tt) at the end; it is a trifling matter, indeed, but it is well to be correct even in trifles. I have seen many of her letters, addressed to others, as well as to myself, but her Christian name never was spelt so—always Harriet. And Shelley, who frequently mentioned her in his letters and journals, always wrote Harriet. The only letters of hers which I can meet with at present are three or four, which I appear to have overlooked; so that I may affirm, rather paradoxically, that I have such of her letters as I had lost, and I have lost those which I had. Amongst the letters missing is that which cut off my promised visit to Carnarvonshire. However, I have been furnished with a letter to another party, in which the Hegira, the flight from Mecca—from Tanyrallt, at least—is described, and the cause of their flight. The Pilgrim Good Intent withdrew hastily, precipitately, to Dublin, and this is the strange story of his Progress:

TANYRALLT, *March 3, 1813.*

DEAR SIR,

I have just escaped an atrocious assassination. O send the twenty pounds, if you have it! You will perhaps hear of me no more!

Your Friend,

PERCY 'SHELLEY.

Mr. Shelley is so dreadfully nervous to-day, from being up all night, that I am afraid what he has written will alarm you very much.

We intend to leave this place as soon as possible, as our lives are not safe as long as we remain. It is no common robber we dread, but a person who is actuated by revenge—who threatens my life and my sister's as well.

If you can send us the money, it will greatly add to our comfort.

Sir, I remain,

Your sincere Friend,

H. SHELLEY.

To Mr. H. T., London.

BANGOR FERRY, *March 6, 1813.*

DEAR SIR,

In the first stage of our journey towards Dublin we met with your letter ; the remittance rescued us from a situation of peculiar perplexity.

I am now recovered from an illness brought on by watching, fatigue, and alarm, and we are proceeding to Dublin to dissipate the unpleasant impressions associated with the scene of our alarm ; we expect to be there on the 8th ; you shall then hear the detail of our distresses.

The ball of the assassin's pistol (he fired at me twice) penetrated my nightgown, and pierced the wainscot. He is yet undiscovered, though not unsuspected, as you will learn from my next.

Yours faithfully,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. H. T., London.

35, CUFF STREET, STEPHEN'S GREEN, DUBLIN,
March 12, 1813.

MY DEAR SIR,

We arrived here last Tuesday, after a most tedious passage of forty hours, during the whole of which time we were dreadfully ill. I'm afraid no diet will prevent us from the common lot of suffering when obliged to take a sea voyage.

Mr. Shelley promised you a recital of the horrible events that caused us to leave Wales. I have undertaken the task, as I wish to spare him, in the present nervous state of his

health, everything that can recall to his mind the horrors of that night, which I will relate :

On the night of the 26th February, we retired to bed between ten and eleven o'clock. We had been in bed about half-an-hour, when Mr. S. heard a noise proceeding from one of the parlours. He immediately went downstairs with two pistols which he had loaded that night, expecting to have occasion for them. He went into the billiard-room, when he heard footsteps retreating ; he followed into another little room, which was called an office. He there saw a man in the act of quitting the room through a glass window which opened into the shrubbery ; the man fired at Mr. S., which he avoided. Bysshe then fired ; but it flashed in the pan. The man then knocked Bysshe down, and they struggled on the ground. Bysshe then fired his second pistol, which he thought wounded him in the shoulder, as he uttered a shriek and got up, when he said these words : ' By God, I will be revenged. I will murder your wife, and will ravish your sister ! By God, I will be revenged ! ' He then fled, as we hoped, for the night. Our servants were not gone to bed, but were just going, when this horrible affair happened. This was about eleven o'clock. We all assembled in the parlour, where we remained for two hours. Mr. S. then advised us to retire, thinking it was impossible he would make a second attack. We left Bysshe and our man-servant—who had only arrived that day, and who knew nothing of the house—to sit up. I had been in bed three hours when I heard a pistol go off. I immediately ran down stairs, when I perceived that Bysshe's flannel gown had been shot through, and the window curtain. Bysshe had sent Daniel to see what hour it was ; when he heard a noise at the window : he went there, and a man thrust his arm through the glass, and fired at him. Thank Heaven ! the ball went through his gown, and he remained unhurt. Mr. S. happened to stand sideways ; had he stood fronting, the ball must have killed him. Bysshe fired his pistol, but it would not go off ; he then aimed a blow at him with an old sword, which we found in the house. The assassin attempted to get the sword from him, and just as he was pulling it away, Dan rushed into the room, when he made his escape. This was at four in the morning. It had been a most dreadful night ; the wind was as loud as thunder, and the rain descended in torrents. Nothing has been heard of him, and we have every reason to believe it was no stranger, as there is a

man of the name of Luson, who, the next morning that it happened, went and told the shopkeepers that it was a tale of Mr. Shelley's to impose upon them, that he might leave the country without paying his bills. This they believed, and none of them attempted to do anything towards his discovery. We left Tanyrallt on Sunday, and stayed, till everything was ready for our leaving the place, at the house of the Solicitor-General of the County, who lived seven miles from us. This Mr. Luson had been heard to say, that he was determined to drive us out of the country. He once happened to get hold of a little pamphlet which Mr. S. had printed in Dublin. This he sent up to Government; in fact, he was for ever saying something against us, and that because we were determined not to admit him to our house, because we had heard his character, and from acts of his, we found that he was malignant and cruel to the greatest degree.

We experienced pleasure in reading your letter, at the time when every one seemed to be plotting against us; when those who, a few weeks back, had been offering their services, shrunk from the task, when called upon in a moment like that.

Mr. Shelley and my sister unite with me in kind regards; whilst I remain,

Yours truly,
H. SHELLEY.

To Mr. H. T., London.

DEAR SIR,

Harriet related to you the mysterious events which caused our departure from Tanyrallt. I was at that time so nervous and unsettled as to be wholly incapable of the task. By your kindness, we are relieved from all pecuniary difficulties. We only wanted a little breathing time, which the rapidity of our persecutions was unwilling to allow. I will readily repay the twenty pounds when I hear from my correspondent in London.

Yours faithfully,
PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. H. T.

Harriet's letter to me was written from Tanyrallt, a day or two after the catastrophe; it bore an earlier date, but in other respects it was, to the best of my recollection, precisely similar, word for word, indeed, to her letter from Dublin of the 12th of March. I have been informed, that she also sent

to other persons a narrative of the nightly fears in the same terms, writing descriptive circulars, and dispatching them in different directions. Persons acquainted with the localities and with the circumstances, and who had carefully investigated the matter, were unanimous in the opinion, that no such attempt was ever made. I never met with any person who believed in it. I have heard other histories, alike apocryphal, of attacks made by the good people of North Wales upon persons of whose sentiments, religious or political, they were supposed to disapprove; but the ale-bibbers and devourers of Welsh-rabbits are too wise, or too stolid, to care how much logic any man may chop within the Principality, or how fine he may chop it. What could the quiet, sheep-tending, mutton-eating, stocking-knitting folks in a secluded corner of Carnarvonshire care about an unread and unreadable pamphlet on Catholic claims and the wrongs of Ireland, privately printed in Dublin? Apollo, the shepherd, would not credit, that a simple pastoral race could murderously assault, and basely assassinate a brother shepherd. How could the countrymen of Talliessin and the other immortal bards persecute and expel from their land of poesy and song the special favourite and pet of the Aonian maids? Neither Bysshe nor Harriet ever spoke to me of the assassination; and the lovely Eliza observed on this subject, as on all others, her wonted silence. There is certainly something fabulous and mythic, that carries us back to the earliest ages and infancy of Rome, leaving us there amidst historical doubts, in the avowed determination of the Cambro-British Tarquin concerning her. Burglary, arson, murder, we can contemplate with dry eyes; but to ravish a guardian angel! The thought of such violation could not possibly have entered into any head but her own; her maidenly fears must have been suggested by an excess of virgin timidity. It is astonishing, indeed, that the good Harriet could so coolly repeat the vain threat.

Dan was an emancipator and a philanthropist. This is his story; it is worthy to be told in an Irish melody, and sung to the harp of Erin. He had been apprehended for posting, distributing, or publishing printed papers, wanting the name of the printer; convicted, and imprisoned. A good angel, although possibly a rebel angel, delivered Daniel from the lions' den. By paying the penalty for him, or by other humane interposition, he was set free; and, marvellous to

relate, Bysshe took the released bill-sticker into his service. Dan was a short, thickset, hard-featured man, of a pure Celtic type. He could not, or would not, speak, or understand, the English language, or comprehend anything whatever. They brought him to London with them, in the following Spring, where I saw him at a hotel, soon after their arrival. Here the stupid, starved savage over-eat himself to such a degree as to bring on a very severe, if not dangerous, illness. It was necessary to remove him to a hospital; and there, after much suffering, he was at last cured, chiefly by the change of hospital diet from hotel fare. Bysshe was persuaded, with some difficulty, to part with him, Harriet declaring he was so faithful. For his health's sake, he was remitted to his accustomed potatoes and butter-milk—the bog-trotter was trotted back to his native bogs; a salutary precedent that might have been very extensively followed, and with the best results.

What part this ruffian may have played in the strange scenes at Tanyrallt—for he was in the thick of them—it is hard to conjecture; whether he had any strictly Hibernian objects of plunder and ordinary villany in view, which were accidentally frustrated; or got up a nocturnal row for the purpose of displaying his fidelity; or created the disturbance through a barbarian panic; or was set on and instructed by some moving power, to whom it was at heart to quit Wales, and for some private end to go again to Ireland—we may soon lose ourselves in conjectures, in vain and bootless conjectures. One thing at least is certain, viz. that Shelley was in a nervous, unsettled state, which was far more likely to be the parent of imaginary aggressions, than the fruit and offspring of a real attack, on the mind of a man of remarkable and unquestionable courage. He certainly never spoke of the murderous assault to me. With regard to what he may have related to others, I can only say, that these assertions were the result of his being agitated with fury, and possessed by the god; for we must speak poetically of a poet. And we may add, whatever the errors and failings of the Divine Poet may have been, womankind is too weak to bear a second Shelley!

A letter addressed to the agent of Mr. Madocks relates to this attack. It is not dated, but it seems to have been written before they quitted Tanyrallt, and under a strong impression of the reality of a transaction of which the broken windows

of the house gave testimony, and bore indications. It was as follows :

MY DEAR WILLIAMS,

I am surprised that the wretch who attacked me has not been heard of. Surely inquiries have not been sufficiently general, or particular ?

Mr. Nanney requests that you will order that some boards should be nailed against the broken windows of Tanyrallt. We are in immediate want of money. Could you borrow twenty-five pounds in my name, to pay my little debts ? I know your brother could lend me that sum. I think you could ask him on such an occasion as this.

My dear Williams, yours very truly,

P. B. SHELLEY.

CHAPTER XXI

My promised visit to Tanyrallt was put an end to by the assassination. My young friends had gone to Ireland ; why they repaired to that country a second time, I could never learn. As a compensation for the expected visit in Wales, I was urgently required to join them in Dublin ; to remain there for a week or ten days, and having viewed that capital and its environs, to return with them to London, where they had determined to reside permanently ; to live there indeed 'for ever'. It was the month of March, during the Spring Circuit, a period when special pleaders, if not absolutely idle, have comparatively little employment ; and I could be spared at Chambers without inconvenience. I had made up my mind to travel at this season to the extreme parts of Carnarvonshire, to undertake a long journey for no long visit ; consequently, to extend my western course to Dublin was not an alarming addition in distance, or trouble, to the trip originally resolved upon.

Although the metropolis of Ireland is not in any respect a first-rate city, it was still no doubt, in its decay, a more important and remarkable place than Tremadoc, of which the grandeur was incipient and future. I received two or three letters from my friends in Ireland, pressing me to come to them immediately, informing me how I was to proceed, and

where I should meet with them ; and assuring me that they would anxiously wait for my coming, and would not leave Dublin until we could quit it together. These letters I cannot now find ; I took them with me to serve as guides in a strange land, and it is not improbable that I lost them on the journey.

There were in those days two mail-coaches to Holyhead, one of them pursuing the route by Chester, and the other by Shrewsbury ; I secured an outside place by the former. At that time of life I was regardless of cold and exposure to the weather, but a friend to whom I communicated my projected expedition, compelled me to accept the loan of his box-coat, assuring me, that I should greatly need it by night at that season amongst the Welsh mountains. I took my seat on the box by the side of the coachman, and left London at nine o'clock on a dark, threatening night.

We had not advanced far before rain began to fall, at first softly, and soon afterwards heavily. My friend's box-coat was of frieze, of a soft spongy texture, an excellent defence against dry cold, but affording protection for a short time only against continuing rain, so that I was soon wet to the skin. I seemed indeed to be more wet myself by reason of the wet rug, which I had on, than I should have been without it : I appeared to be clothed in a full suit of wet sponge. I suppose we stopped for our meals in the course of the night and on the following day, but not often, and never for a long time. When and where we baited, I do not remember. I remember nothing but wet and cold ; it continued always to rain, to rain from the west, to rain in my face. Heaven's water descended upon my hat ; it ran from my hat down my neck ; it penetrated the thick soft coat to my body ; it flowed copiously over my chilly hands, issuing from the sleeves ; and flowing freely out of my trousers, at the ankles, irrigated incessantly my benumbed feet ; and the cushion of the box, upon which I sat, and where all things were disagreeable, this was the most disagreeable thing of all, became saturated with moisture, like a piece of turf newly dug out of a flooded bog. In those early and inhospitable ages no apron protected the knees of the coachman and his assessor ; during my long and manifold journeys on the outside of coaches I have frequently wondered, why there was no such defence, and I have greatly and vainly desiderated it ; in this respect at least I was before my age !

'It is rather soft weather, gentlemen!' said our other outside passenger, who sat behind us on the roof. He was a tall, bony, red-haired Scot, to the full as wet as myself; about once every hour he observed with much seriousness, and with the air of one who had made an unexpected discovery, to the coachmen and myself,

'It is rather soft weather, gentlemen!'

'It is, indeed', I answered.

'Soft and be——' exclaimed my friend on the right.

A quarter of an hour after his first remark our solemn fellow-passenger from the north ventured upon a second, uttering it also as if it were a novelty.

'And it is not over-warm! Not a bit!'

This was his whole stock of small talk. I recollect that we remained some time at Chester to take supper; and that the supper was nasty, and the inn dirty and disagreeable, and that there was much confusion, because the passengers by other coaches supped at the same time and in the same room.

I, wet, mounted my wet seat again, sitting now by a rude companion, who was conspicuously a Welshman, and looked more like a shepherd than a coachman. We soon approached the mountains and the sea; and then, to solace my second night of travel, it began to rain in good earnest, and as if it liked it, and the heavier rain was rendered still more impressive by a squally wind. But it made little difference to me; I had been like a spout too long to mind it: that the water ran along a good deal faster under my clothes, did not seem to be any concern of mine!

The guard told me, that we were to breakfast at Conway. This information comforted; it promised warmth and refreshment; the pleasing images and foretaste of warm tea, hot toast, and possibly of broiled meats, consoled me in passing through wind and rain, and the county of Flint. Fortunately, I did not yet know what a breakfast at Conway was.

The Cambrian coachman pulled up short at the mouth of a wide river, wild, rough, and stormy, as the sea itself, and the sea was pouring into it with mad fury. We got into a boat, or rather the mail-coach was emptied of all its lumber, living, dead, and half-dead, into a large terry-boat; we had a rude and tedious passage across. When we were midway, they spoke of a fatal accident that had occurred there just a month before; that the ferry-boat was upset and the mail-guard drowned.

Twenty years afterwards, in 1833, I visited Conway again, being a Commissioner of Municipal Corporations, and I spoke of this occurrence to the Vicar ; he took me into the churchyard, and pointed out to me the grave, tombstone, and epitaph of the unfortunate guard. I have travelled much by coaches ; and, therefore, I know, as well as any man, and to my sorrow, what a bad breakfast is, and I assert with the hard-earned confidence of long and painful experience, that the breakfast at Conway was never surpassed. Vile bread, vile butter, and the vilest tea ; we ordered other things, they readily promised to bring them, and they told us, growing impatient, that they were coming directly : but the guard came first, and gave us notice that the mail was ready to start.

Our short stay at the wretched inn was rendered still more distasteful by the odious, discordant noise of a brawling Irishman, who would keep on assuring everybody in a loud voice and an offensive brogue, that he was proud of his country : nobody noticed his vulgar clamour, but all persons present seemed to suspect that he was not so proud of it as he said he was.

Having affected us with notice, the guard set an example of promptitude by mounting the stern of the coach and sounding his horn. I ascended uncomforted to the temple of the winds and storms ; and it rained and blew harder and harder, whilst we proceeded, as it were to do honour to the great mountain, Penmaenmawr, and to the furious sea. Through flood, but not through fire, we advanced, and reached another ferry, Bangor Ferry, across the Menai Straits. It was stormy, rough, and wild, but being farther inland, farther removed from the fierce sea, it was not so formidable as the mouth of the river Conway. Here we were tumbled by rugged Welsh ferrymen, without ceremony, bag and baggage, mail bags and mail baggage, into a large boat ; with the accustomed delicacy and attention of mail-coach travelling, of which the leading principle always was—so that the letter-bags and guard are safe, the passengers and their effects may go to the devil ! The wind and tide were unfavourable, and the Channel was rough ; we were tossed up and down in our boat, and were a long time in crossing ; but the boatmen pulled hard, and we got to shore at last.

To take our places instantly, and to make the best of our way, for we were late : these were the orders, and they were obeyed. It was something to set foot in Druid-ridden Anglesea

for the first time, to traverse the whole width of Mona ; to see plainly with my own eyes that there was nothing whatever to be seen. It was delightful to believe that I should soon arrive at Holyhead—the Head it was called by general consent. It would be impossible to embark in less than twenty minutes, a space of time amply sufficient for my purpose, which was, the moment we drew up at the door of the inn, to march with my little portmanteau in my hand into a bedroom, and to fasten the door, to strip off with all speed my wet blanket, my coat, and all my wet clothes even to my wet skin, to tie them up in a dripping bundle, and to put on everything dry ; and going thus quite dry on board the packet, in a berth, on a bench, or upon the floor of the cabin, to sleep soundly, and as one would sleep after spending two long days, and two longer, sleepless nights in the rain, wind, and cold on the top of a coach.

The anticipated pleasure was a full remuneration for my sufferings. My pleased fancy prompted that I was to awake somewhat late, to go at once upon the deck, and to behold the Green Isle, and the proud palaces and tall spires of Dublin, so near to our cutter—that I might confidently expect, in two or three hours, to be seated at breakfast with Bysshe, and to be telling him my windy, watery tale.

It rained during my transit over Anglesea, but modestly, as it ought to rain in a flat country—as it might have rained at York, or in Middlesex. It was fair when we drew up before the door of the inn at Holyhead : we descended, and forthwith the merciless mail drove off. It was to proceed at once to the boat. All our luggage was to be put on board immediately—nothing whatever could be taken out of the boat on any pretence. Very well ! my soul said to itself : I can change my clothes on board ; the delay will not be great : in half an hour I shall be dry again, from head to foot ! What a blessing !

We were to dine directly, for it was late, and our time was short ; and the moment we took our seats at the table, a waiter went round with a plate to collect our money ; so we paid for the dinner before we were permitted to eat it. The provisions looked well. There was a nice roast leg of mutton, mealy potatoes, and other things—all very tempting ; but before anybody was helped the inexorable guard entered with our cruel sentence. We had not an instant to lose : the packet was just about to sail.

A waiter, who seemed to be a friend in need, took me aside, and told me, in confidence, that nothing was to be had on board the packet ; no victuals were supplied ; nothing could be bought ; and we might be a long time at sea ; therefore I had better purchase the leg of mutton which had not been cut, and a loaf of bread, and he showed me a fine large loaf. I paid an exorbitant price for them, and for a bottle of sherry ; but I felt that I was perhaps redeeming my forfeited life. I was then told, that I had not a moment to spare : I must run down to the boat as fast as I could, or I should be left behind. My friend indeed, the civil, compassionate waiter, assured me that he would take care that the leg of mutton and the loaf, with the wine, should be safely sent on board for me ; I need not be under any apprehensions. I ran down to the boat, and was pushed into it. We were tossed about a good while by the white-headed waves of St. George's Channel, on board the crowded boat, but the near prospect of dry clothing, an abundant and excellent supper, to be eaten at my ease and with the fullest leisure, and finally a good night's rest, sleeping quietly in some warm, snug corner, filled my fatigued brains with the most agreeable images. Had I been gently gliding down the smooth Cydnus, on board her golden galley, with the lovely Queen of Egypt, blessed by her favouring smiles, amidst the profuse and elegant luxury of Greece and of the East, I could not have felt a more lively conviction of impending happiness. We came alongside the dancing vessel : at one instant, our fickle boat would dive under its keel, and then it suddenly strove to dash bodily upon its deck. At a critical moment, roughly but skilfully, the helpless passengers were thrust head-long, in the dark night, up the side of the packet, and we found ourselves staggering on the crowded, moving, and slippery deck. The crew were busy setting the sails, and everything was in orderly confusion. As soon as our good sloop was on her course and making way, there was peace on board. It then appeared to be practicable to stretch forth my hand, and at once to grasp impending happiness. I meekly attempted to ask after my mutton and my sherry. Roast mutton and bottled sherry have no necessary connection with the perilous navigation of the coasts of North Wales ; I met with little attention and no sympathy. However, I discovered, only too clearly, that there were no advices, and no effects. I then modestly demanded my portmanteau, that I might at least put off my wet garments, and thus enjoy

the poor satisfaction of enduring hunger for an indefinite period with a dry skin. The mail bags, the baggage of both the Irish mails, and the luggage of all the passengers on board, had been stowed away forwards; my portmanteau was quite safe; it would be kept dry; I might have it, when I landed; the hatches had been fastened down; it was impossible to break bulk.

The night was dark and cloudy, the wind blew fresh and cold, but fortunately it was fair. I walked the deck all night, pacing backwards and forwards, in my wet clothes; I was very cold and very hungry, chilled and famished; but I marched on bravely, walking every step of the way, and as fast as I could, from the Head to Ireland. By the morning I was dry; nor had I ever felt any the least sickness, although the sea was rough. The packet was much crowded; there were several carriages on deck, and the persons who sat in them relieved, or amused, themselves by being sick out of the window. The cabin was filled with vulgar, noisy people; crammed, indeed. I never once ventured to go below; I took a survey of the place through the skylight, and that was enough; I saw plainly that it would not do. Besides, to sleep in my rain-soaked raiment would have been imprudent.

The next day, the third day of my pilgrimage, was fine and dry; the sky shone above me clear and bright; the wind was less strong, but it still blew cold, and I was more cold and hungry than ever. How I should have enjoyed a little breakfast, however homely; a crust of brown bread and milk, skim milk, oatmeal porridge, cold cabbage, anything; but no man gave unto me. There was a tall footman, in a purple livery, standing plate in hand by the open window of a purple coach; I made a circuit, and took an observation, and I had the gratification to see a bishop sipping hot chocolate out of a large china cup. It was pleasing to be assured that all meats and drinks had not entirely disappeared and vanished from the face of the earth; and that one fellow-creature at least was well cared for. I should have liked a little luncheon, an early dinner, the earlier the better; and I eagerly desired to catch a glimpse of Ireland and of hope, but Ireland could not be seen. Presently some Irishman declared, that he saw the Wicklow Mountains, but others, his countrymen, rudely contradicted him, and said it was impossible; so it was disputed for a long time with much noise and vehemence and muttered threats, until the mountains were visible, and so conspicuous that

there could be no mistake, no dispute, even amongst Irishmen. In the afternoon, we were in the Bay, at some point, of which I do not remember the name. The captain and guard went on shore in a boat with the mail bags, leaving the poor passengers on board to settle it as we could.

The passengers, it has been said, paid the whole expense of the conveyance of letters, as well by the coaches as by the packets, and yet they were too often treated with neglect, occasionally with insolence, and sometimes, as in the present instance, even with cruelty. Our captain was a good seaman, without doubt, but he was disobliging; his crew took him for their pattern. Such of the sailors as deigned to return an answer to our questions did not know when we should land, and were proud to let us see that they did not care. A gentleman asked them to make a signal for a boat from shore: They had no right to make signals! One man, less uncivil than the rest, said, 'You make any signals you please yourselves, we will not prevent you!' A passenger hung out a kind of flag; it waved about, and for a time appeared to be disregarded. At last there was a joyful cry of 'A boat! a boat!' and by-and-by a large boat, rowed by four men, came alongside. Two of the men stepped on deck: they would take us to some place; it was five miles off, but we must give them five shillings a-head. I gladly embraced the proposal, and all the other passengers, who desired to go on shore at that spot, at once assented. It seemed that all was arranged, when a little Irishman advanced: 'No! you shall not go on shore with these fellows; not one of you. I am determined. Blackguards, scoundrels, villains; I will never stand quietly by and see the gentlemen passengers by His Majesty's Post-Office Packets fleeced and scandalously plundered by these exorbitant rascals. You shall go ashore, gentlemen; you shall all go, but at your own price, not at theirs!' He was a middle-aged man, thin, and of short stature, and with an extremely Celtic face; that is to say, he looked as if his face had been broken to pieces, and the fragments had been put hastily and carelessly together again, some bits not in their places, and the room of other lost pieces had been replaced by paint, putty, and anything that was at hand. He spoke with a powerful brogue, fluently, and even eloquently, and with much vigour, energy, and action; but his language was violent and abusive. The men stood out for their price, but they were civil, respectful, humble. Four shillings and sixpence were

proposed and refused. Four shillings ? No ! Three shillings and sixpence ? The discussion seemed endless ; the men were not less dramatic than the principal disputant. It is of no use ; cast off the boat ; let us go home ! I was taken in by them, and dreading a still longer fast, and possibly another night on board, I said, ' I will give you your price ; it is not unreasonable ; I will give you your five shillings in hand, if you like, only do not go ashore without me ! '

' We will not go without you, sir ; you may depend upon it '.

The little disputant, who seemed to be a person in some authority by station, character, or office, gently put me aside.

' The gentleman is too kind to you, a great deal. You are a parcel of dirty villains ; you shall not have five shillings of his money ; I will take care of that ! '

' The gentleman is very kind ; but we are poor men ; we have our bread to get ! '

Two hours, at least, were wasted thus in a violent and wearisome dispute ; eventually it was arranged, that they were to put us on shore at two shillings a piece. And then we were all on board the boat and away in a trice ; certainly they were very smart fellows. The little wrangler was to the full as noisy in the boat, as he had been in the packet ; he loudly vociferated, that two shillings a head was enough ; the rowers assented, and it seemed that we were all of one mind.

After we had made a mile, or so, of way, the brawling little fellow changed his tack.

' Do they not pull well ? Are they not fine fellows ? Did you ever see better rowing ? Are they not boys ? We must give them sixpence more. If they keep it up thus, it must be half-a-crown ! ' Never was there a smarter boat's crew they were four fine young fellows ; never did men pull harder that was most manifest.

Our friend, if such he is to be called, loudly renewed and repeated his admiration at intervals ; and at every burst of applause he raised the price sixpence ; when we were a quarter of a mile from shore, the fare stood fixed at four shillings and sixpence, but suddenly the clamorous blockhead bellowed out :

' I say, lads, can you hit it ? '

' Oh, to be sure we can ! '

' Well, then, if you hit it, you shall have your five shillings, without any abatement '.

' Thank you, sir ; thank you ; thank your honour, kindly '.

Accordingly, the head of the boat went bump against some

post at the landing-place, and each of the gentlemen passengers, by His Majesty's Post-Office Packet, paid the dirty villains five shillings, the sum originally demanded.

I did not catch the name of the place where I landed ; it was at some distance, five miles, I think, from Dublin. I readily procured a car, and was jolted along a rough road and through ill-paved streets in the dusk. The driver did not, or would not, know the situation of the inn, to which he was to take me. When he was tired of driving me about, he stopped at the door of a hotel, and demanded much more than the sum agreed upon ; then a mighty contention arose, and an incredible number of persons took part in it. I was firm, tendering the appointed fare. He consented in the end to take it ; and now for the first time a new difficulty arose, but which I had to encounter during the whole of my stay in Ireland. I had no silver, no other money indeed than one pound notes of the Bank of England, and these were not available. Change for one of them could not be obtained. My Automedon, in despair of getting payment, after various fruitless attempts to find shillings, or tenpennies, proposed that I should give him an I O U for four shillings, on a slip of paper ; I did so.

The inn was odious, the food abominable, the attendance intolerable ! It took a long time to get hold of a servant ; when he was caught, he promised civilly enough to do what was required ; he went away and paid no more attention to the orders he had received. When he was apprehended again, which was not soon or easily effected, he had forgotten all about the matter. To get anything to eat was difficult, to get anything fit to be eaten impossible. Sleep after three nights watching under circumstances of extreme discomfort and vast fatigue was indispensable : a good night's rest was most desirable to one worn out and spent : in the morning I should certainly find the friends, to join whom I had endured such severe hardships. I resolved to go to bed at once ; to repose a few hours would suffice. Nevertheless, in this simple, unpretending arrangement I met with new and peculiar embarrassments. There was not a single-bedded room in the house ; all the sleeping rooms had two beds at the least. I could not have a room to myself ; and on farther debate I was made to understand, that I could not have even a whole bed to myself ; that I must make up my mind to receive a bedfellow, if need were. After much altercation I chose a bedroom with only two beds in it, secretly determining to lock and bolt the door.

Being left alone, I went to secure the door, but it had neither lock, nor bolt, nor any effective latch, for that was broken, so that the door must stand ajar.

I was overcome with weariness and vexation, so I crept half-undressed into one of the two beds, and fell suddenly into a deep sleep. I did not awake till morning ; it was quite light, and I awoke with horror, expecting to find by my side some uncouth bedfellow, some big priest perhaps. It was no small relief to find that I was quite alone. Had I locked the door it would have been of no avail, for a panel at the bottom was loose. Presently it was softly pushed aside, and a youth crept into the room.

‘What do you want, pray?’

‘I am the boy Pat, Mr. Hogg ; I have only come to clean your honour’s boots a bit!’

He took them away, and I rose, and was soon engaged in shaving a beard of four days’ growth, when I heard a noise in my chamber.

Some loose boards in a corner of the room were thrust aside, and a man below began to bawl out lustily. I went to the hole in the floor, and inquired, what was the matter?

‘Oh, I beg your honour’s pardon, I was not speaking to you ; I am speaking to the gentleman upstairs!’

And he continued to call out louder than before, until a ragged head appeared through a corresponding hole in the ceiling, which I had not noticed. A long dialogue was carried on thus through my apartment between the two gentlemen in a vociferous manner ; they doubtless understood each other, but what they said was unintelligible to me.

The boy Pat did not bring my boots back ; to call him on the stairs was found to be useless by me persevering. I went down into a squalid coffee-room, and wasted my energies in fruitless efforts to procure breakfast. There was one person in the room, and he was at breakfast—a grave, civil Scotchman. I complained to him, that I could not get anything to eat.

‘You will never get anything, sir, for you do not know the house. If you choose to take your breakfast with me, you are welcome. I know the house!’

I gladly acceded to his proposal, for I was famished : I had scarcely eaten at all—assuredly not to any good purpose—since I left London. I took a seat at his table, and fell to, like a starving man. There were cold fowls and boiled eggs, both excellent, and good bread : the other things were nasty.

He had more fowls and eggs brought : by what magic he affected it I could not comprehend, but they were supplied liberally. I ate freely, and was filled and comforted.

'I have often heard, sir, that Ireland is famous for its poultry, and such seems really to be the case, if these fowls are a fair specimen'.

'I never heard the remark before. I have been all over Ireland, and, now you have mentioned it, I feel that it is so. They have fine fowls and good eggs everywhere'.

'As you know the house, perhaps, sir, you can get me my boots. The boy Pat took them away, and will not bring them back again. You have done me one favour ; will do you me another ?'

'Most willingly !'

The good genie then took upon him to procure my boots for me ; but all his powerful incantations were required to bring it about. With much trouble, the benevolent Scottish magician conjured up the boy Pat, who, constrained by the spells, brought at first a shoe and a boot ; then some odd boots, one of which was mine. I quickly seized it, and afterwards he reluctantly produced the other.

My kind preserver, fortunately for me, knew the house : he also knew Dublin, and put me in the way to find Stephen's Green, the address which Bysshe had given me. Stephen's Green is a larger and a handsomer square than Lincoln's Inn Fields, as the boastful Irish confidently assert. It is probably somewhat larger, but it is far less handsome : there are grass fields in the middle of the square, with cows in them, and a thorn hedge all round.

I knocked at the door marked with the number indicated in the letters of my friends ; and after how much fatigue and suffering ! But now these were forgotten, and were about to receive their reward. A man servant answered the door ; it was the right house. He told me to wait a moment. The master of the house came running downstairs and received me cordially, shaking my hand with effusion.

I inquired eagerly after Mr. and Mrs. Shelley.

'Oh ! It is all right !'

'Where are they ? Pray let me see them !'

His answer certainly astonished me.

'If you will do me the honour to come here to dinner to-morrow at five o'clock, Mr. Hogg, I will give you some dirty mutton, a bottle of real, good, old port wine, and a hearty

welcome : and then you shall hear all about your friends. Oh ! he is a nice gentleman, Mr. Percy Bysshe Shelley ; a real gentleman ! Will you come ? ' .

I thanked him for his hospitality ; and I stated that I had lately arrived from London, having come to Dublin to join my friends, and that I wished to see them immediately.

' Oh ! but you cannot see them immediately '.

' Why not ? ' .

' Why not—because they are just at Killarney ! ' .

I had not yet heard of William Godwin's adventures at Lymouth ; had I known them, the conviction that the picture of my fortunes in Ireland would have the honour to form a suitable pendant to a graphic delineation of his exploits in North Devon, would not have tempted me to venture upon so protracted and so painful a pilgrimage.

' It will be easy and pleasant for you, Mr. Hogg, to go on to Killarney, and join your friends there. But will you promise me not to set out before you have dined with me ? I am engaged to-day, unfortunately, but to-morrow, will you come ; will you promise ? ' .

I promised very readily ; for to spend a few days in seeing Dublin, to enjoy such amusements as the place might afford, and then to return to London—this was my only safe course. I complained of the utter discomfort of my inn : ' If there is no other less miserable, can decent lodgings be procured for a week ? ' .

' I will take you to as good a hotel as any in London. I am particularly engaged at this moment ; call at four, and in my walk to dinner, I will introduce you at a house where you will be perfectly comfortable ' .

The day was bright, sunny, dry, rather windy, and somewhat cold ; it was much like March weather in England, and there was no lack of March dust in Ireland. I walked about the city, and searched out some marked objects, but the reality did not justify the magnificent descriptions which I had heard of them. Almost all things were poor and mean ; some few were handsome, but scarcely anything was at all remarkable. I was punctual to my appointment. We walked together to the inn, where I had slept : change for a one pound note was not to be had,—not to be thought of ; I paid by another I O U ; my new acquaintance settled the matter summarily, perhaps arbitrarily. The driver of the car had called twice, whilst I was out, to have his I O U cashed. Poor fellow !

The boy Pat was caught, and he carried my portmanteau ; his services were not thought worthy of an I O U. I was to think of him, when I could get change ; and I was as good as my word, for frequently afterwards, when I have had a pocket full of silver, I have thought of the boy Pat ; how he pushed out the loose panel, and crept through the door, to take away my boots, and keep them from me.

CHAPTER XXII

THE hotel was a handsome house enough, in a principal street ; the dinners and other meals in the coffee-room were very fair ; the wine was decidedly good, and it was supplied in large bottles, each containing the full measure, a quart, or a pint. The attendance was bad, especially at first ; but when I got to know the house—that is, to know the haunts of the servants, where they were to be found, and to go and catch them, and to speak to them in a proper manner, partly familiar and partly authoritative—it was sufficient. There were two beds in every room, but by special agreement I was to have the exclusive occupation of my bedroom ; and I gave additional force to the agreement by cautiously fastening the door, in the only way in which it could be secured, by tying down the latch at night with a piece of string. A scene which I once witnessed, at a house much frequented by the Irish—the *Bush Inn*, at Bristol, had not diminished my distaste for lying two in a bed, according to the ancient usages of the Isle of Saints and virgins. The chamber-maid conducted me into a double-bedded room ; I objected, and asked to have a room with only one bed in it ; she said there was not one at liberty, and whilst we were disputing, a huge, hairy Irishman sprang out of one of the beds, and stood before us, stark naked, in the middle of the room. ‘The gentleman may have whichever bed he pleases ; I have only this moment got into bed, and if he prefers my bed, I will get into the other ; it is the same thing to me ; I am always willing to accommodate a gentleman !’ The woman was accustomed to the ways of her Milesian guests, and was not the least disconcerted at what she beheld, but stood by unmoved, candlestick in hand, thanking him for his civility. I went away, and finding a room with a single bed, took possession of it. I learnt afterwards that it was the practice

of the Irish to sleep quite naked ; and this did not lessen my disinclination to have such a bed-fellow, although, like my civil friend at the *Bush*, he might be always willing to accommodate a gentleman. I dined, according to his invitation and my promise, with my most obliging new acquaintance ; and I was very well treated by him in every respect. He had a tall, big, handsome young wife, with bright red hair, but extremely good-looking. She was kind and polite. To my surprise, I perceived that I could not understand a word she said, nor could I make myself understood by her : and this I found was often the case with regard to other natives, during my short residence in Dublin, their English being as unintelligible to me as their Irish.

Nothing could exceed the kindness of this gentleman ; he introduced me to several of his friends, all of whom were as obliging as himself. He spoke to me of the wrongs of Ireland, and asked me what my sentiments were on that subject. I knew nothing about the matter, and consequently I had no sentiments, or opinions, to disclose. He often returned to the momentous question, as he called it, and pressed me to make a fair and free disclosure of the feelings of an honourable man. Being unwilling to deceive any one, especially so friendly a person, I said to him, continually urging me,

‘ Do you know London ? ’

‘ Perfectly well ; as well as I know Dublin ! ’

‘ Do you know Chancery Lane ? ’

‘ Yes ! Faith ! Right well ’.

‘ It is not very wide, even in the widest part ? ’

‘ No ! It is very narrow. It is not like Sackville Street ? ’

‘ Not the least in the world ! ’

‘ Well, then, to tell you the truth—and it is always best to tell the truth, and not to sail under false colours—I would not take the trouble to walk across Chancery Lane in the narrowest part, if by so doing I could at once redress all the wrongs and grievances of Ireland ; emancipate the Catholics, and turn them all loose upon the country, to play the devil, just as if they were good Protestants ’. He laughed heartily at this sally, and was much pleased with my open, fearless candour. He introduced me to some institution, club, or reading-room, where there were newspapers in plenty, and some books ; and a very nice place it was. When he first took me, some gentleman asked him, if I was a friend to Ireland ? He answered : ‘ Yes ! a true friend ! ’ And then he

told the people present what I had said concerning Chancery Lane. They did not treat me the worse for it. On the contrary, I fancied they seemed pleased, proud, elated; that everybody who heard it felt himself a foot taller on finding that he had the happiness to live in an age which had produced one thorough contemner of humbug. My friendly guide carried his kindness so far as to send me every day at dinner time, wet from the press, a Dublin Evening Paper. I read it faithfully after dinner, because he wished me to read it, and because he always examined me in its contents the next morning. It treated of politics, about which I cared little, and chiefly of Irish politics, about which I cared nothing. I told him it was ably written, and so indeed it was.

'Had I met with anything I disapproved of in the paper?'

'Nothing whatever.'

He said to me at parting, 'Now that you have read something about our Irish grievances, tell me frankly your opinion of them?'

'What I have read has entirely confirmed the only opinion which I ever formed of the whole matter, that the Devil may mend it, if he will; for full sure nobody else can!'

He spoke frequently of Bysshe, and with uniform, unvarying kindness and respect; and so spoke all in Dublin, who had ever seen him, in a handsome, liberal, and gentlemanlike manner. This unanimity was a real and solid gratification to me; and another tribute of regard was still more pleasing: to me, a young man, it was delightful to hear my friend, a young man, named and remembered with marked and distinguished favour, for his good looks, by females, themselves eminently good-looking. They discoursed, with a due discrimination of colours, of the locks of dark brown hair shading an intellectual and inspired countenance.

And let it be remarked, by the way, that persons who had never seen Shelley, or were incapable of correctly distinguishing hues and shades of colour, have sometimes erroneously assigned to him 'golden hair'; it was of a dark brown, without a tinge of red, or yellow; there was no more gold in his hair than there usually was in the poor fellow's pocket.

I was often warmly recommended to go on to Killarney; the lake and country were well worth a visit; no doubt they were, possibly even in the month of March. My friends would be charmed to see me; they would, certainly. I should be quite sure to find them there; this, at least, was doubtful;

and one such a wildgoose chase as I had just indulged in was sufficient sport for one season.

I breakfasted on a Sunday morning somewhere, in order to see at one glance all the fashionable society in Dublin ; and for this purpose they conducted me to a chapel, where the most popular preacher in the capital officiated, and all persons of fashion congregated to listen to his eloquence. The orator spoke that affected, mincing dialect, which is but too commonly in use amongst the upper classes in Ireland, which is always painful to English ears, and sometimes absolutely intolerable : the fashionable world had a mean and poverty-stricken aspect. A conspicuous, glaring poverty pervaded the whole city. I never once met a woman in the streets with silk stockings, although I walked about everywhere ; and by riding in jaunting-cars and gingells in windy weather, the daughters of Erin lost no opportunity of exhibiting their millposts to an unprejudiced and observant stranger ; I should have seen their silk stockings, if they had been worth a pair.

I saw very few pretty women here, and they were all in the upper classes ; the lower orders were hard-featured and ugly, without one exception. I never saw so few good-looking females in a large city. In Naples the women were for the most part plain, but not ugly, as they too commonly were in Dublin.

The Theatre Royal, in Crowe Street, is a sorry building for the chief, or the only theatre of a capital city ; my active guide conducted me to it on a fashionable evening. Change, the door-keeper could not give ; an I O U could not be taken there, but my conductor pledged his sacred word of honour for me at the door. The pledge was accepted, and I was admitted to the dress-boxes. The beau monde looked rather seedy ; the all-pervading poverty was apparent here as elsewhere : there was not merely a want of small change, but a want of money. The play was King John ; the part of Lady Constance was filled by Miss O'Neil. I have frequently witnessed that lady's performance subsequently in London with admiration and delight : she was already a great celebrity in Dublin, but, I confess, I was much less struck by her acting than perhaps I ought to have been. The character is not effective ; possibly it did not suit her ; and to say the truth like everything else in Ireland, she had been puffed so outrageously, that the excessive praise which had been dinned into my ears, indisposed me to perceive and acknowledge her

real merit. Everything besides, which I had hitherto seen, had disappointed me so much, and had fallen so very short of the extravagant laudation heaped upon it, that the mind was weary of being balked, and was fatigued with constant shortcomings.

The boasted Sackville Street and the bepraised squares were certainly handsome ; yet they had a dull, deserted look. The Vice-regal Castle was but a shabby Lincoln's Inn. Sir John Stevenson played well on the organ ; and the monument of Jonathan Swift is undoubtedly genuine ; nevertheless, for an archiepiscopal cathedral, St. Patrick's is a mean, dirty, dismal church.

At Trinity College the buildings are handsome and commodious ; but to eyes accustomed to the neatness, the propriety, the elegance with which the several colleges in the University at Oxford are kept and garnished, its neglected air bespeaks a workhouse ; and in comparison with the smart, well-dressed, gentleman-like undergraduates, my former associates, the young hopes of Hibernia, however promising intrinsically, seemed outwardly a buttonless, stringless, ragged lot. There was a noble library, I was assured, containing many rare and valuable MSS., and a vast collection of printed books ; but I was also assured, and doubtless with equal truth, that it was useless to visit it, for it was in the utmost disorder and confusion.

The Bank of Ireland alone, formerly the House of Parliament, deserved all the commendations poured out lavishly over it. Of all the infinite gasconades this alone is just and well founded, that the important business of banking is not, and cannot be, carried on in a more magnificent structure in any other city. The small currency of Ireland had long consisted almost entirely of the notes of provincial banks for sums under the value of one pound ; of bank notes for a crown, and, if I mistake not, for I never saw a specimen of this paper money, for half-a-crown. All these notes, the sole medium of small payments just before my arrival in Dublin, had been unadvisedly, inconsiderately, and wickedly, withdrawn suddenly and totally from circulation before any substitute was introduced. The inconvenience and confusion created by this rash proceeding are not to be described. How long the curse continued to afflict and desolate the country I know not : during my short visit, it was at the highest point. This execrable interdict upon all ordinary dealings does not appear

to have met with adequate reprehension ; or that the stocks, the pillory, and the whipping-post, the well-merited chastisements of political economists, so foolish and mischievous, were brought vigorously into requisition. The holders of my I O U's became numerous, and sometimes they were uneasy ; they seemed to be apprehensive, that I meditated flight. I could only offer a pound note to any one who would undertake to get it changed ; but that was impossible. So whenever my securities happened to be looked upon with disfavour in the Dublin money market, they pressed me with clamorous but never uncivil, or disrespectful, importunity.

The driver of the car assured me, probably with perfect veracity, that he wanted a bit of bread for his babes, shoes and food for his horse, his wife, or himself ; and he earnestly besought me, for the sake of the Holy Virgin, the blessed Mother of God, just to take up my I O U. In my urgent distress I applied to my very obliging acquaintance. Surely there were bankers, merchants, in a large city, from whom a few pounds' worth of silver might be procured. He assured me that the thing was impracticable ; and he adopted a palliative, which was national, characteristic, and effectual, at least for my personal relief, but not altogether in accordance with my feelings and wishes. This was his hunting-whip ; with the doubled thong at first, when my creditors were near at hand, and afterwards, when they began to retreat, with the point of the lash, he procured for me temporary accommodation, forbearance and relief. He was a thoroughly good-natured fellow, and he did more towards clearing the ground by cracking his formidable whip, than by actually striking the clamorous applicants who pursued and hunted me about. Sometimes he would apostrophize them in this fashion :

'You dirty villains, what do you mean ? Is this your hospitality ? The good gentleman has come from London expressly to redress the wrongs of Ireland, and you torment him in this manner ! Take yourselves off, you dirty blackguards !'

In addition to the pursuit of my daily increasing creditors, I was constantly followed by a troop of ragged, squalid beggars. It was a novelty to hear women asking charity, for the sake of the Holy Virgin, of the Mother of God, of the blessed Mary, the mother of the sweet Jaysus.

I remained a week or ten days in Dublin. I had visited every place that was reputed to be worthy of a visit. I never

was in a town of the same dimensions in which there was so little to be seen.

I had not received any intelligence from Killarney, although I had written to my friends, and I was not inclined to pursue them farther. I brought with me money enough to pay my journey to Dublin, and back again to London, with a small reserve for contingencies. This was almost consumed, and it appeared to be prudent, and on all accounts desirable, to return home. But I could not discover how this was to be done, without discharging my debts, and that seemed to be absolutely impossible. I consulted my obliging Mentor, and he kindly proposed that I should leave the amount of my outstanding debts with him in notes, and he would undertake to discharge every I O U, as soon as silver money could be obtained.

Accordingly we had a meeting of my creditors—an audit; the holders of securities were very accommodating. I gave the auditor the total amount, and when the day of payment arrived he could discharge all my obligations, and give every man his own.

I determined to return by another and preferable route, and I took an outside place to London by the Shrewsbury mail. I sailed on a fine afternoon by the Post-Office Packet, from the Pigeon House; the vessel was not crowded as before, and I slept soundly on a sofa in the cabin. When I awoke in the morning, I saw a Scotch gentleman seated at a small table with a fine cold fowl before him, and a large loaf. He civilly asked me to assist him in eating his provisions. I felt hungry, certainly, but I also felt and expressed some scruples at diminishing his stock; and I honestly told him that I had not the means of repaying him, if he should run short, as I had no sea-stores. He answered: 'There was no fear of that; we should land in half an hour, and if I went on deck for a minute, I should have a fine view of the Head'. The morning was sunny and bright; the sight of the desired port is always pleasant, and I found the prospect lovely and exhilarating. When I went down again into the cabin, my share of the fowl was on a plate before me. I had no time to lose, he said, and I did not lose my time. We made a hasty meal, commending, as was most due, the excellence of Irish poultry. My entertainer complained bitterly of the disorder and confusion which reigned universally in Ireland; of the utter want of punctuality in business, and of other defects, which must

be peculiarly odious and inconvenient to an exact, precise, and formal Scotchman. I felt these deficiencies very sensibly myself; and yet, to say the truth, I quitted the Green Isle with regret; I liked it with all its faults, and I acknowledged that if circumstances should require it, I should not be altogether sorry to make my residence there: because it was an aristocratical country; every feeling, to the back bone, and to the heart's core, was aristocratical; I had seen that a gentleman is always treated in Ireland like a gentleman, and that to live well there it is only necessary to be a gentleman, and to behave like one. He shook his head at this, and affirmed that my feeling in favour of aristocracy was narrow, vulgar, selfish, unfounded, ignorant; 'and, I must add, young gentlemen, although I say it with pain, a most highly reprehensible prejudice'. I held steadily to my principles, and I added, 'The little which I have seen of Wales, I liked much, and for the same reason—that also is an aristocratical country: quite as much so as Ireland'.

'Oh! my good sir; the Welsh, as a nation, are in the very lowest state of human degradation!'

'Yet they boast that they alone, of all nations, have never been conquered.'

'Precisely so! and for a very plain reason—because they were not worth conquering; and if they merit anything at our hands, it can be nothing more than total extermination!'

I was not to be put down, so I went on: 'I have not seen much of Scotland, but I liked what I saw there, for there likewise is a decided leaning towards aristocracy'.

At this remark, he immediately changed his note: 'And so you liked Scotland! Oh! that is a fine country! There you see civilization at the highest pitch! What a noble race of men! So you really liked Scotland? Well, it is a powerful, an irresistible argument in favour of your good sense, my young friend, that you liked Scotland!'

The conversation was interrupted by an order to get into the boat. We embarked, and my patriotic acquaintance took his place by my side, lecturing, as we neared the shore, on the pre-eminence of Scotland, and inquiring with interest what parts of that country I had seen; and at the moment of landing he said: 'If you love social refinement, you must lose no time in visiting Glasgow!'

The mail was ready to start; I mounted upon the roof, the box being already occupied. As soon as I was seated, with a

smack of the whip and a blast of the horn we bid adieu to Holyhead. We recrossed Mona, and came to Bangor Ferry, where, at a charming inn, and for a moderate charge, we had ample time to enjoy an excellent repast. We passed propitiously the Menai Straits; the marine river was now as bright, as calm, as smiling, as it had before appeared gloomy, rough, and threatening. I hastened from the boat to regain my watch-tower near the skies. The afternoon was clear and sunny. We proceeded onwards to Capel Cerrig. No language can describe the beauty and majesty of the scene which I now beheld, perched on the roof of the coach: Snowdon and the magnificent chain of lofty mountains filled me with admiration and delight. I was now amply repaid, overpaid for all my labours, and sufferings, and disappointments.

My return to London was as auspicious in every respect, as my journey to Dublin had been cruel and terrible. The service of the mail and the accommodations for passengers were as convenient and satisfactory by this route, as on that by Chester they had been comfortless and disgusting.

The weather was favourable all the way; the nights cold, but serene and fine: my friends' blanket coat, which had proved useless, or rather mischievous, in heavy and incessant rain, was now sovereign, and kept me as warm as I wished to be. I arrived at the General Post Office in London in due course, upon the whole much gratified by my fortnight's tour to the sister island; by my hasty visit to my little sister, Cinderbreech, to the poor snubbed and slighted Cinderella. For some days after my arrival in Dublin, I felt as if I should never be warm again, and when I laid my hand upon my flesh my body struck cold as marble; but by degrees the chill departed, the natural heat returned, and I suffered no lasting inconvenience. Amongst many other advantages, which I derived from my journey, one of the most striking was the marked difference in tone, with which my Irish acquaintances spoke to me of their own glorious land, when they were informed of my actual personal inspection of it. One of the boldest boasters said to me meekly on my return:

'You could not fail to remark, that as they paint everything in London, so they paint nothing in Dublin; and that it would be quite as difficult to find a broken window-shutter in London and the neighbourhood, as it would be to find a whole one in, or near, the proud metropolis of Ireland'. To have learned fully to appreciate in all its bearings this candid

and judicious remark is surely not to have travelled in vain !

CORK HOTEL, DUBLIN, *March 31, 1813.*

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

We have just arrived in Dublin—had you remained here but one day, you would have seen us. We travelled night and day, from the receipt of your note. My Harriet insisted on accompanying me. Her spirits, and the hope of seeing you here, supported her through two days and nights of hard travelling : 240 English miles.

You falsely supposed that her note was in answer to yours. We did not receive yours until Monday noon. On Monday evening we began travelling on Irish roads with Irish horses and chaise. We reached Cork at one the next day, took the mail, and to-day, Wednesday, at three o'clock arrived. We shall soon be with you in London ; Eliza and our servant remain at Killarney.

You ought not to accuse me of reserve towards you. It is the inconceivable blindness and matter of fact stupidity of Lawless that deserve your reprehension ; but had you staid one day longer, you would have heard the words of sincerity and friendship from my own lips. As soon as I shall consider the fatigue as overcome, I shall come to London. I must by some means raise money for the journey here, but I am not one to stick at difficulties.

Do not write to us here. We shall be on our way before your letter could arrive.

Harriet unites in kind remembrances.

Your very sincere friend,

PERCY B. S.

Harriet will write to-morrow.

To T. J. H.

DUBLIN, *April 3, 1813.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I wrote yesterday before I had seen Lawless, under the one and only impression of disappointment at not meeting you here. That, however, shall speedily be remedied. I have raised a small sum of money, and to-morrow evening we embark for Holyhead.

I have been very much pleased at what Lawless has said of you. The first ten words he spoke entirely dissipated all the

ill-humour I had cherished against him. He had done what I could not conceive any one, who dined with you, could have neglected. He had been open with you.

Of course you will not write to us here. Above all do not send, or dream of procuring for us any money ; we will do those matters well. The property of friends at least is in common. On Monday evening we shall be in London.

I write from Lawless's. I am very much pleased and flattered by his account of you.

Harriet is quite well. She writes to-day.

My dear friend, all happiness attend you.

Yours affectionately,
PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H.

[No date.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We have just arrived. We are now at 23, Chapel Street, but will see you, or write to-morrow morning.

Yours affectionately,
P. B. S.

To T. J. H.

35, GREAT CUFFE STREET, DUBLIN,
May 3, 1813.

DEAR SIR,

I take the liberty of troubling you with these few lines to be informed by you, how our good friends the Shelleys are, from whom I have heard but once since they left this country. I did flatter myself with a letter from my friend long before this, and now begin to apprehend some serious cause for his not writing. I hope no such cause has interposed, and if not, you will much oblige me by telling him, how anxious both Mrs. Lawless and I are to hear from him and Mrs. Shelley. I suppose Miss Westbrook has long since arrived with you.

I remain,

Your very humble Servant,
JOHN LAWLESS.

To T. J. H.

(First Indorsement.)

SUNDAY MORNING.

DEAR HARRIET,

I am very sorry that Bysshe is unwell. It is hard that

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his heart should be so good, and his head so bad : I wish you had as much influence over the latter as over the former. Mr. Lawless has had the goodness to send me the paper, on which I write. Bysshe will answer him. I met Mr. and Mrs. N., as I returned last night ; they ordered me to tell you, that they would take tea with you this evening. Adieu !

Yours truly,
T. J. H.

To Mrs. Shelley.

(Second Indorsement.)

Bysshe is better now, and wishes for your company this evening, at eight o'clock, to meet the N——s.

HARRIET.

To T. J. H.

CHAPTER XXIII

A DAY or two after my return to London, I received a letter from Dublin, and, after a like brief interval, another letter from the same place, and presently afterwards a short scrawl, without a date, announcing the arrival of my friends in town, at the house of Harriet's father. There appeared to have been a misunderstanding on both sides, and at all hands, but how it arose I could never comprehend at the time ; and it would be vain indeed to attempt now to discover its source.

I found Bysshe and Harriet in a hotel at the West End : they were both well, and in good spirits ; the lady was as bright, blooming, and placid as ever. They expressed much regret at my fruitless expedition, and most kindly condoled with me. I had made a long and energetic, although not an agreeable journey ; nevertheless, there is a certain pleasure in energy and exertion ; and I had enjoyed the advantage of seeing something of Wales, and much of Dublin ; so, being reconciled to my lot, I was in a condition to act as a comforter towards them. They complained bitterly of the fatigue, expense, and hideous improbity of their long and barbarous course. Their wearied souls were brimful of the recollections of discomfort and miseries endured at Killarney ; where, that they might be more thoroughly wretched, they had

occupied a cottage situated upon an island in the lake. I write hesitatingly, for I never saw Killarney myself, or visited the county of Kerry ; and their descriptions were not graphic, or even precise. The climate is mild, but the weather rainy and stormy ; beyond belief and conception stormy.

Bysshe discoursed with animation and eloquent astonishment of the perilous navigation of the lakes ; of sudden gusts and treacherous whirlwinds. How vessels were swamped and sunk in a moment ; and he related with implicit faith tales savouring somewhat of Milesian exaggeration and credulity. How a boat had sometimes been caught up out of the water by a storm, carried bodily on shore, and deposited at a distance from the margin of the lake.

I could not make out why they had gone a second time to Ireland ; there was no political object as before ; in truth, they did not know the reason themselves, and could not therefore inform me. Something was said about its being a change : it would have been a change to have gone to Nova Zembla, but hardly a more prudent or pleasant one. It might well be, that some glowing description of a beautiful locality from the lips, or in the pages, of a picturesque tourist caught the vivid imagination of the Divine Poet, and determined him on the instant to seek, forgetful of all other considerations and of every previous subsisting engagement, a perpetual asylum in a terrestrial paradise ; to betake himself, as fast as post-horses or the mail coach could convey him, to the south-western corner of Ireland, that he might settle at Killarney 'for ever'. If the irresistible delusion was sudden, it was as suddenly dispelled, for certainly the spell was broken, the fascination was at an end ; he had awakened completely from his dream of fairy-land.

He had taken, or sent, a considerable number of books to the happy cottage on the blissful lake ; many useful volumes collected in the solitude of Tanyrallt, and for which he had so earnestly written to his correspondent in London. When he started off hastily to overtake me in Dublin, or to join me in London, he had left Eliza in charge of his library. He was evidently weary of angelic guardianship, and exulted with a malicious pleasure that he had fairly planted her at last. He made no secret of his satisfaction, but often gave vent to his feelings with his accustomed frankness and energy. The good Harriet smiled in silence, and looked very sly ; she did not dare to express her joy, if she really rejoiced at the absence

of her affectionate and tiresome sister, by uttering treasons against her liege lady, the defender of her nerves. The deliverance was of brief duration—surprisingly brief, for in an incredibly short space of time Eliza reappeared and resumed her sovereign functions. They remained for some time at hotels, and during this period Eliza was with them, mute, smiling and languishing as before. Whether she lived constantly with them I was not exactly informed ; it seemed rather, that she went and came in a hushed, mystical manner. However, she was often present when I visited them, but retired frequently to her bedroom, probably to brush her hair assiduously as of old. Whenever she joined us, she displayed the same painful interest in Harriet's nerves ; their condition was authoritatively pronounced to be shattered and deplorable ; and when she deigned to wonder at anything, she wondered what Miss Warne would say. On some days she was unquestionably absent ; and then, perhaps, she had gone to hold a chaste conference with her virgin friend respecting the nervous system, and actually to hear what the oracle said.

Harriet gave visible promise of being about to provide an heir for an ancient and illustrious house ; and, like all little women, she looked very large upon the occasion. She was in excellent voice, and fonder than ever of reading aloud ; she promptly seized every opportunity of indulging her taste : she took up the first book that came to hand as soon as I entered the room, and the reading commenced. Sir William Drummond's *Academical Questions*, Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, some of Bishop Berkeley's *Works*, Southey's *Chronicle of the Cid*, had taken the place of Telemachus, Belisarius, Volney's *Ruins*, and the other works, which she had formerly read to me. Whenever Eliza made a descent upon us, silence was immediately proclaimed, and the book was carried away.

'Dearest Harriet, what are you about ? Only consider the state of your poor nerves ! Think of your condition ! You are killing yourself as fast as you can ; you are, indeed, dear ! Gracious heaven ! What would Miss Warne say ?'

I dined with my young friends one day at a hotel in Dover Street. Bysshe was to go somewhere with all haste—a common occurrence with him—to perform, or to procure, something mysterious and prodigious. He could hardly be prevailed upon to take his dinner ; he restrained his impatience until our meal was finished, and whilst the waiter was remov-

ing the cloth, he sprang on his feet, snatched up his hat and ran away, leaving me alone with Harriet. We sat and conversed for awhile ; she probably was wishing for the moment, when with a decent and proper regard for the paramount duty of digestion, she might begin to read aloud.

Before the desired moment came, Dr. S. was announced, and a quiet Quaker physician quickly entered the room, his hat upon his head, and a bland smile upon his countenance. I rose instantly to depart, but the doctor seized my arm, and made me sit down again. I felt uneasy, but believing that he took me for the husband of the lady whom he attended, I was about to inform him that I was not, when Harriet interposed :

' You need not go away ! Dr. S. does not desire it, I am sure. He rather wishes you to stay ! '

My position seemed delicate and distressing, but it was not so. The Doctor seated himself over against his blooming young patient, and rather near to her, looking at her fixedly ; the bland smile was still upon his countenance, and the ample hat was still upon his head. Nothing was said, either by the lady or by her dumb physician.

Twice, or thrice, the latter murmured softly and inarticulately.

The mute consultation continued about ten minutes, and terminated abruptly. When he had satiated his eyes, and satisfied the demands of science by gazing silently, Dr. S. started suddenly from his chair, as if something had stung him behind, and with a celerity hardly natural in a Quaker, quitted the room, carefully closing the door after him. Harriet appeared to be relieved at being delivered from his silent, searching eye.

' Well ! You see there was no necessity for your going away ; not the least in the world. You might very well stay ! It was Bysshe's wish that Dr. S. should see me, and he has seen me ! '

Dr. John S. was a very distinguished member of the Society of Friends ; he was eminent as a botanist, and eminent likewise as a ladies' physician. The speechless individuals of the vegetable kingdom did not require him to talk to them ; he might arrange them, and distinguish their several species in the most profound silence. But the success of so taciturn a doctor with animated nature, with natures very animated, with patients who love to speak and to be spoken to, especially

on those interesting occasions, to which his extensive practice was chiefly directed, was certainly remarkable. I have been told that he would attend a female through the whole affair without once uttering a single word, even in a protracted and difficult case. It was wonderful how the charming, prattling sex could endure such mute ministrations ; how a nice talkative young lady could ever bear to be put, not chattily to bed, but drily, like a specimen of a woman, into a herbarium, or hortus siccus ; and as though, in truth, she was not more than many flowers ! I have sometimes thought that his numerous patients imagined that the doctor must speak at last ; that some day or other, sooner or later, he would say something ; and then, what in the world would it be ? And that the hope of being the fortunate holder of the prize ticket consoled them for his obstinate silence, and supported them under it. To hear eventually the secret of secrets would be a full compensation for the pains and perils of child-birth ; for all the preceding apprehensions and inconveniences ; for all succeeding sufferings and maladies ; for a tedious confinement ; for the sorrows of suckling ; for blighted hopes and bitter bereavements ; nay, even for the attendance of a dumb accoucheur ! Woman is Nature's masterpiece, as well as that of Aristotle ; and when the very observing doctor's close and varied examination of strange and astonishing things, continued moreover without intermission for many years, should transpire at last, being clothed in appropriate language, the full and final disclosure of the sleek, sly, silent Quaker would at once atone for a whole life of the strictest reticence !

Dr. John S. doubtless made his observations on the lovely Harriet, but he did not communicate them. During the sole interview I ever had with our valued Friend, not one drop of the grand secret oozed out.

Shelley continued to reside for some weeks at hotels ; some persons blamed such a course as imprudent, and moreover as being expensive, but his motives were discreet and rational. Next August he would be of age. It was confidently asserted, and generally believed, that his father would then come to a satisfactory and proper arrangement. It was thought that a hotel was more convenient for negotiations than lodgings. His father, it was said, would pay his debts, of which the amount was inconsiderable, and make him a moderate, permanent, and suitable allowance.

For some two years I had seen but little of Bysshe, but from this epoch it was my good fortune to see a great deal of him, and to enjoy, off and on, much of the unappreciable pleasure and advantage of his most precious society and familiar and friendly intercourse. Having consumed many valuable hours in the dull diplomacy of his father's agents, and finding the residence at a hotel, a place where the Muses do not haunt, unfavourable to study, and to assembling a goodly fellowship of ancient books round him, he took lodgings in Half-Moon Street. I went one day, by invitation, to dine with him there, and on arriving I found Harriet alone.

'Bysshe called on the Duke of Norfolk this morning, who asked him to dinner, and it would have been improper to have refused. He has just gone, but he will come to us as soon as he can get away'.

Harriet and myself dined together, and had tea ; and after tea Harriet was reading aloud to me, as she was wont to do. Her reading was abruptly put an end to by vehement and well-known rapping ; Shelley came tumbling upstairs, with a mighty sound, treading upon his nose, as I accused him of doing, rushed into the room, and throwing off his neckcloth, according to custom, stood staring around for some moments, as wondering why he had been in such a hurry. He informed us that there was a large party of men at Norfolk House ; he sat near the bottom of the table, and the Earl of Oxford sat next to him. After dinner, the Earl said to him,

'Pray, who is that very strange old man at the top of the table, sitting next to His Grace, who talks so much, so loudly, and in so extraordinary a manner, and all about himself ?'

'He is my father, and he is a very strange old man indeed ! The Earl said no more on that head, but we continued to chat together, and he walked with me from St. James's Square. I have just left him at the door'.

Feelings of sympathy and antipathy are various and manifest. Bysshe appeared to be pleased with the Earl of Oxford, because he disliked his father. I did not know the Earl, but I was so fortunate as to meet his lovely and fashionable Countess occasionally, and I was soon able to discover that we had one point of sympathy and strong common feeling—an intense abhorrence of bores.

The first time I met this admired lady was at a conference of wise men and wise women—a conversation party ; the term, an evening's work, *soirée*, was not then in use. Some

philosophers were discussing at length, and in a sufficiently tiresome manner, about the locality of the Garden of Eden ; concerning the true situation of the terrestrial Paradise. Lady Oxford plainly showed her sense of extreme weariness by gaping and yawning aloud, quite unreservedly, as she would sometimes do, like one who was deemed above ordinances. When there was a pause in the conversation, being encouraged, perhaps, by the lady's oscitancy, I ventured to say,

'I believe I know exactly where Paradise is situated ?'

'Where ?' asked some one shortly, and in a tone which seemed to imply—'what can you know about the matter ?'

I answered, 'It is certainly in Cranbourne Alley ; for there so many pretty faces may be seen flitting about the bonnet-shops on a fine day, that it is impossible to believe Paradise can be anywhere else'. The philosophers appeared to be disgusted at my impertinence ; but the lovely Countess took me by the hand, and always treated me with much kindness.

Another evening, the whole party was sentimental, and each person present, in turn, pathetically selected some favoured spot in which it would be sweet to be buried. Some romantic churchyard in Wales was chosen, or a secluded nook in the district of the English Lakes. The church was to be small, old, overgrown with moss, and shaded with ivy. There were to be ancient trees, yews in particular, and nightingales were to sing in them. There must be a crystal brook near at hand, flowing with a gentle murmur—a babbling brook. The ground must not be moist and marshy, nor the situation low, but light, sandy soil, on a moderate acclivity, was preferred ; for to lie dry is thought comfortable, even after death.

'You have not told us, Sir, where you would like to be buried', the Countess said to me, although she had not fixed upon her own sepulchre. 'You are too young to have thought much about it. Perhaps you have not made up your mind ?'

'I have thought about it ; I have made up my mind, quite'.

'Where is it to be, then, will you tell us ?' 'Certainly. For my part, I should choose to be buried under the kerb-stone, before the door of the most fashionable milliner in London ; it would be no mean consolation to know that the prettiest feet and ankles in the world were stepping backwards and forwards into and out of carriages, all day long, over my head'. In those days we had feet and ankles ; we showed

them freely, and never supposed that there was any harm in it. We were naked, it is true, but being innocent, we were not ashamed; indeed, we did not even know that we were naked. In those days, also, there was a visible, sensible difference, a marked diversity, in the forms of females; now all are made alike, and in the similitude of champagne bottles; and as for feet and ankles, for anything that appears to the contrary, ladies now-a-days are moved about upon castors, like easy-chairs and tables.

The latter sally was not more displeasing than the former one; but I am not writing the history of my own life and times, but the biography of a Divine Poet, to the illustration of whose remarkable character alone every word should tend. In the year 1810 I went home for the long vacation, travelling to the North of England on the outside of coaches. The first of these was a Birmingham coach, which stopped to breakfast at Stratford-on-Avon, where I had never been before. I willingly forfeited my breakfast that I might see Shakespeare's House. I saw it; and the church being open, I saw the tomb also, and the celebrated bust, with its high forehead; and by hard running I got back to the coach just in time to regain my airy seat.

My fellow collegians and travelling companions laughed at my enthusiasm, a frame of mind in little favour at that time in our ancient University.

'How did you like your breakfast?'

I got nothing to eat until dinner at Birmingham!

'You will surely be a poet yourself!'

I am not a poet; but I am a biographer of a Divine Poet, whose acquaintance I had the good fortune to make on my return to Oxford in the following October. It may be, that familiarity with an illustrious poet must always be purchased by some sacrifices; by the loss of a breakfast at the least!

Bysshe, as has been asserted already, and will be declared again and again, was invariably an especial favourite of the fair sex; he was cherished as the apple of beauty's eye; he was often called by names of endearment, as Ariel, Oberon, and spoken of by the ladies of his acquaintance as the Elfin King, the King of Faery, and under other affectionate titles. Elegant society was deemed to be his proper element, to adorn which appeared to be his natural vocation; to bring him into it, and to keep him in it, was the anxious care of several amiable and charming creatures at the present crisis of his

life. It was thought desirable to procure for him an introduction to the Countess of Oxford, in order that her wise and gentle influence might perchance make him less unlike other people, and bring about a certain reasonable compliance with received usages. With this view, he was mentioned to her by several of his female friends, and she was well disposed towards him, greatly interested in him, and inclined to admit him amongst her acquaintances. She asked many questions concerning the young poet, and spoke of him, not merely with curiosity, but with kindness and regard. These benevolent intentions did not lead to any practical results; they were frustrated chiefly by the departure from England of this distinguished lady, who went with her family to reside at Cagliari.

John Horne Tooke was at this time the oracle of the liberal section of literary society; his testimony was cited in favour of the ingenious Countess. Discoursing one day of learned ladies and women of talent, the Philosopher of Wimbledon, as he was sometimes styled, declared that he had never known a woman of talent. The best of them, he said, are mere parrots; they repeat what they have heard, but without understanding it: if what they repeat happens to be clever, although it is not their own, and if it be really clever, it never is, they obtain credit for a degree of cleverness to which they are not entitled. But when I say I never met with a woman of real talent, I must, in justice, make one exception, and that is Lady Oxford. He then cited some of the excepted lady's smart sayings, which he proved to be original and spontaneous; and demonstrated that they could not possibly have been learned by rote. I have forgotten these proofs and instances; but I remember that I inquired with some solicitude, whether the cynic, for such surely he must be accounted, had ever been in company with the daughter of Neckar? but I could not make out how that was. Whether the morose sentence included the most celebrated Blue of the age, or perhaps of any age, amongst the hen parrots; whether Corinna herself was but a talking bird, a 'Blue bird!' Lively, agreeable, and good-natured conversations I well recollect; but no profound observations—nothing likely to throw into the shade the Proverbs of Solomon, or the Precepts of the Seven Wise Men of Greece.

The pompous Dr. Parr at one period puffed this distinguished lady most vigorously; but his judgment was less

sober, his evidence less truthful and worthy to be relied on, than the decision of the author of '*Winged Words!*' Notwithstanding all his efforts, the Reverend Doctor Samuel Parr could not get himself made a bishop: in order, therefore, to spite the more fortunate Lords Spiritual and their archdeacons, he took it into his head to wear the cassock, which he maintained is, according to the canons, the proper dress of a priest. It is also generally worn at the two Universities, but never there without the gown, as he wore it: moreover, the pushing priest, in his canonical costume, had the satisfaction, such as it was, of passing for a bishop in the streets, and with strangers. The doctor was in full flower at that time—covered with bloom, indeed; puffing himself, and being puffed, parading and praising himself at every point of the compass. The singularity of his clerical vesture attracted much observation and continual criticism: it might be in accordance with the canons of the church, of which nobody knew anything, but it was contrary to long-established usage, and with this all the world was acquainted.

The Countess openly threatened to ask him, why he alone of priests wore the proper and peculiar dress of priesthood; but she was assured that it was a delicate inquiry, a sore point, and he must not be spoken to on the subject. However, she had betted five guineas, it was reported, that she would publicly ask him, why he wore the cassock. Despising all friendly cautions, and in defiance of warnings and admonitions, she boldly persevered in her contumacious design.

'Pray, Dr. Parr, how long have you taken to wear petticoats?' she said to him one day at a large dinner-party.

There was no answer, and the company laughed; and thereupon the audacious lady triumphantly repeated the question in a louder voice.

'Ever since your ladyship has taken to wear the breeches!'

She won her bet, certainly; but she earned her five guineas!

Whether this anecdote be strictly true, I know not: it was current at the time, and pretty generally credited: if it be not true, it is at least not ill found.

With respect to the famous cassock, I not only saw it several times, but I once wore it myself for an hour or more—a distinction which few persons can boast.

A clever artist, with whom I had some acquaintance, was employed to take a likeness of Sam. Parr. He had already made considerable progress in his work; what he had done

was most satisfactory to himself, to the Doctor, and to his numerous friends ; and he was extremely anxious to complete the portrait with equal success.

‘ The Doctor is not a good sitter : he is very restless, and unless he has somebody to talk to him and amuse him, I cannot keep him quiet ; and then I do not get on with my work so well as I desire. I am unable to converse with him myself. Will you come and talk to him at his next sitting ? You will do me a great favour—a real kindness ! ’

The next sitting had been fixed for the following Sunday, for the Doctor’s stay in town was limited. I went to breakfast with the painter.

‘ The Reverend Doctor has promised to sit this morning for two or three hours, during the time of divine service. You must not tell at what time he sat ; so mighty a pillar of the church would not like that it should be known ; indeed, he charged me particularly not to mention it to anybody ; but he will not mind you, I am sure ! ’

After breakfast the bells struck up, calling the sheep together into the fold ; the good shepherd came to us punctually. The immortal editor of the immortal *Bellendenus* was conducted straight to the painting-room, and we joined him there immediately. He was not at all displeased at seeing me, but shook hands cordially, and was in high good humour ; and, to say the truth, he always appeared to me to be a thoroughly good-natured, kind-hearted old man. He pointed out the fire in the short clay pipe held in the hand, and extolled the felicity with which the burning tobacco was represented, enlarging greatly upon that theme. The artist smiled.

‘ That is not a very difficult feat of art, I believe ? ’

‘ Not at all ’, said the painter ; ‘ but what do you think of the likeness ? ’

‘ It is admirable—perfect ! ’

And so in very truth it was ; absurdly, ridiculously like, and yet a pleasing picture. The visage was required to be tauriform—as much like a bull as possible, only without horns, and in that respect, therefore, unlike Moses or Bacchus, or a bull, and like the Doctor.

The learned sitter arrayed himself in his canonicals, mounted the raised chair, was placed in proper attitude and light, and the work of imitation duly advanced.

It was easy to talk with Dr. Parr, for he loved to have all the talk to himself, and to lay down the law : however, he

desired to be understood, and he expected to meet with attention ; and, indeed, his conversation deserved it. His discourse was always worth listening to, and instructive, more or less : it cannot be denied that, for good taste, he spoke too much of himself. Having ascertained from his watch that people must be coming out of church, he took off his gown and departed suddenly, and somewhat sooner than was expected.

I was requested to take his place for a little while, and accordingly I put on the cassock that had been sent to be worn by the painter's lay figure ; the light fell at that moment, it was said, in an agreeable manner upon the drapery about the knees : the effect ought not to be lost, for, in the language consecrated to art, it was rich and happy.

The worthy and most laborious artist told me, whilst I was sitting in proper priestly costume as proxy for a reverend priest, that the great Sir Joshua Reynolds had said, that no painter had ever attained to eminence, who looked upon Sunday as a holiday ; and that, for his part, he always worked particularly hard on that day. He then discoursed of Dr. Parr with admiration, and with admiration still more profound of my friend Shelley ; how much he desired that these two wonderful men should meet ; how much he wished to be present at their meeting, and to listen to their exquisite conversation ! I have heard in other quarters of the project of bringing the old Grecian and the young Poet into personal communication ; but it was not a promising one.

Sam. Parr's delight was to dogmatize—to have everything entirely his own way ; he had no relish for any companion who doubted his absolute infallibility. Besides, a Whig divine is placed in a very critical position, between two fires ; he has to try to make his way, to creep, to the paradise of a bishopric—a long and narrow bridge, narrow as the edge of a razor ; he must not compromise his orthodoxy on the one hand, or his liberality on the other. Bysshe, on his side, had no inclination for the society of a pedagogue ; an invitation to come and converse familiarly with a schoolmaster, how illustrious soever, would appear too like a summons to return to Eton, and have an agreeable chat with old Keate, whom his soul abhorred ; too like bidding him to cross the great gulf of eternal separation, and to commune again with the Big Wigs of Oxford, for whom he very naturally had conceived an intense hatred, mingled with well-merited and unmitigated

contempt. And so the friendly conference with the Reverend Doctor Samuel Parr never came off!

In London, Bysshe found books and society, and he appeared to rejoice in being delivered from the long-endured, intolerable loneliness of Wales: the good Harriet also rejoiced, and was bright, blooming, calm, and composed, as heretofore; but she had not renounced her eternal purpose of suicide; and she still discoursed of some scheme of self-destruction, as coolly as another lady would arrange a visit to an exhibition or a theatre. She told me sometimes that she was very unhappy, but she never said why; and in particular, she told me frequently, as she had told me formerly, that she had been very unhappy at school, and often intended to kill herself. I asked her again and again the cause of her unhappiness, but she did not know it. It certainly appeared to be mere talk, and I found a festivity in it; it became jolly, as it were, to laugh at her suicidal schemes, and the solemnity with which she unfolded them: with this she was now and then a little offended. 'Mamma is going to have some walnuts pickled next week', a little girl once said to me, a little boy; and she added, with a grave look and an air of quiet resolution, 'and mamma says she is quite determined!' So poor Harriet was quite determined, and did not choose to be laughed out of it, being displeased with my apologue of the walnuts.

In this strange world one comes across strange people sometimes, and finds strange kinds of industry, especially when a man lays himself out for strange characters. Dining one day at a hotel in London with Bysshe and Harriet, I met a poor poet there, whose acquaintance they had just made—how, I know not; I think, through some advertisement in a newspaper. Shelley introduced me to him, and grimly whispered, that he was going to kill himself. 'Very well!' 'Immediately!' he added. 'With all my heart!' The professor of suicide, it must be admitted, had rather a melancholy look. He was pale, cadaverous, and he discoursed during dinner in a grave, pedantic manner, of his inflexible resolution to commit suicide, as it seemed, instantly; and he talked much, and with due solemnity, of Otho—of the Otho of Tacitus—until dinner was over. Otho, he said, was his favourite—his hero! However, Otho ate his salmon and lobster sauce, and whatever else was put before him, largely and voraciously, and with a prodigious relish; took his

wine very freely, and then a long nap ; and finally departed, without having become a felon of himself. When he had taken his leave, Harriet told me with great glee—' the gentleman is going to kill himself '. ' Really ! ' ' Directly ; is not that quite delightful ? ' ' Quite ! ' ' I should not wonder if he is doing it now ! ' I did not wish to put her out of conceit with this notion, but I should have wondered much if he had been doing anything of the kind. I saw him twice or thrice, there and thereabouts ; his talk was ever in the same self-murderous vein ; so confidently did he speak, so urgent was the necessity, that on leaving the room for five minutes one might expect to return and find him in a pool of blood ; but no, the calamity never happened ; it was plain that suicide was only his stock-in-trade. All people laughed at him, except Harriet, whose sympathies were excited at first ; but after a short time, even she got tired of him ; or possibly she was jealous of Otho's superior confidence of assertion touching impending self-destruction. What ultimately became of the fellow I know not ; I never heard that he cut his throat ; perhaps he hit upon some other mode of getting a dinner, when this dodge was seen through.

Poor Shelley was too often taken possession of, and kept in a sort of imprisonment, or duress, in the society of persons in every respect unworthy of him, for their own sordid and selfish purposes ; the plunderers taking care, meanwhile, that the captive and victim should see as little of his old friends as possible. One of the many inconveniences of being distinguished is, that every impudent pretender thinks he has a right to introduce and push himself, as an admirer of talent and genius, being at once a devoted worshipper, and a person admirably fitted to be kicked out of the room. Bysshe was cruelly pestered by impertinent intruders, and he felt the annoyance very sensibly ; he used sometimes to turn them over to me ; this was not pleasant for either party. But, however coolly such fellows might be treated, they would seldom go away the sooner ; nothing, in short, but the free and liberal use of a pitchfork, or flail, would have delivered us from the unwelcome company.

If the line of life which the young poet had taken subjected him to many disagreeable intrusions, and brought him frequently in contact with odious and pernicious people, on the other hand, it was the means of introducing him to some pleasant and clever persons, from whose society he derived

much delight, and no small profit. Such intercourse exercised a powerful influence on his character and conduct. I will select a few instances, treating the subject somewhat discursively, as a miscellaneous matter. He spoke with enthusiasm of a charming family, whose acquaintance he had lately made, in what manner I do not remember, and he promised to introduce me to them, declaring that I should be as much taken with them as he was himself. He informed me soon afterwards that he had spoken of me to them, that they desired to see me, and the next day he would take me to dine with them. The next day—it was a Sunday, in the summer—we took a walk together, wandering about, as usual, for a long time without plan or purpose. About five o'clock Bysshe stopped suddenly at the door of a house in a fashionable street, ascended the steps hastily, and delivered one of his superb bravura knocks.

'What are we going to do here?'

'It is here we dine'.

He placed me before him, that I might enter first, as the stranger; the door was thrown wide open, and a strange spectacle presented itself. There were five naked figures in the passage advancing rapidly to meet us. The first was a boy of twelve years, the last a little girl of five; the other three children, the two eldest of them being girls, were of intermediate ages, between the two extremes. As soon as they saw me, they uttered a piercing cry, turned round, and ran wildly up stairs, screaming aloud. The stairs presented the appearance of Jacob's Ladder, with the angels ascending it, except that they had no wings, and they moved faster, and made more noise than the ordinary representations of the Patriarch's vision indicate. From the window of the nursery at the top of the house the children had seen the beloved Shelley—had scampered downstairs in single file to welcome him; me, the killjoy, they had not observed.

I was presented to a truly elegant family, and I found everything in the best taste, and was highly gratified with my reception, and with the estimable acquisition to the number of my friends. Nothing was said about the first strange salutation, nor did I venture to inquire, what it signified. After dinner, Bysshe asked, why the children did not come into the room to the dessert, as usual. The lady of the house coloured slightly, and said Shelley should see them by-and-by, in the nursery, but they did not dare to show them-

selves in the dining-room. They were all too much ashamed at having been seen, as they were, so unexpectedly, by a stranger !

Nothing more transpired to clear up the mystery of their nudity. At subsequent visits, the whole system was unfolded.

I am quite unable to do justice to the theory of philosophical nakedness. I can only recall a very few things of many which I heard on that head. There was to be soon a return to nature, it was believed—to the natural and pristine state of innocence, in which we are taught, by the highest authority, that human beings were naked.

In order to prepare mankind for the happy impending restoration of perfect and universal nudity, children ought to be accustomed at an early age to be, at least occasionally, naked. It was alleged, moreover, that the practice of stripping young persons sometimes is eminently conducive to their health, to strength of body, symmetry, beauty, and to morality, and virtue ; and that even grown persons may derive much benefit from remaining some hours, in mild weather, without their clothes. It was most manifest that the children liked to nakedize—such was the term of art—exceedingly ; but it was something new and different from the ordinary routine of jackets, trousers, and petticoats—in a word, it was a change. It was conceded as a privilege and favour, and whilst they remained naked they were allowed—a glorious concession to a child, to make as much noise as they pleased. These young innocents were remarkably healthy, happy, beautiful and intelligent ; whether they would have been less so if they had always worn their clothes like other children, it is not easy to determine. As far as we can learn, nations who are habitually naked are not more healthy, happy, handsome and virtuous, than people who are constantly clothed from head to foot. The mistress of the family assured us that she frequently remained for hours without her clothes, and derived much advantage from the complete exposure to the air. She never seemed to have much the matter with her ; and in imaginative persons fancy sways their feelings and convictions. ‘ I rose early this morning, and having locked myself into my dressing-room, or undressing-room, I remained for three hours, stark-naked. I am all the better for it, I assure you ; I always am. I feel so innocent during the rest of the day ! ’ Impertinent persons would sometimes laugh at her frank avowal of superior innocence. Never was there a

more modest, a more virtuous lady ; never was there less cause for malicious laughter ; and her feelings are perhaps intelligible enough. Any one who begins the day by remaining stark-naked for three or four hours in the early morning, closely shut up, and of necessity alone, is compelled, in order to pass the time, to be steadily employed during the entire period of seclusion, in reading, writing, drawing, working—to persevere in the performance of some engrossing duty. A day commenced in so useful and creditable a manner cannot fail to bring with it impressions of self-satisfaction and innocence. I gained some credit by communicating that I had sometimes nakedized, under the authority and by the advice of the celebrated Dr. Franklin, who wrote with earnestness in commendation of air-baths, for so he called and esteemed the remaining naked for some hours in the early morning. He discourses at length about the salubrious influence of the air on the bare skin ; of this I do not pretend to judge. When I was young, I was surprisingly strong and healthy ; air-bathing unquestionably never did me any harm, nor, so far as I could discover, any good ; but I was so well, that it must have been a wonderful air and a wonderful bath indeed that could have made me better than I then was. This practice, like all other practices, had its peculiar conveniences and inconveniences. To carry it into effect, it is necessary to rise betimes, for in the first morning alone a person is seldom wanted, and the bath is not liable to be interrupted—a most salutary condition. The air-bather, so long as he remains in the bath, is constrained to employ himself, to sit reading, or writing, with closed doors. To quit my occupation without quitting the bath was impossible. On the other hand, it prevented a healthy morning walk ; it cut one off from intercourse with others ; and it did not allow me to go forth on the spur of the occasion, and the suggestion of the moment, to do something that might be useful or expedient. Moreover, there is some danger of going out unawares, unconscious of nakedness, for by familiarity with the state of nature, and wrapt up in abstract study, one soon learns to forget the helpless and shameful condition. It is a prudent precaution, therefore, not only to lock the door, but also to put the key away in some place that may remind us, through artificial memory, and the association of ideas, in seeking it, that our first parents were too fond of apples and of knowledge. The father of air-bathing, it is said, was once guilty of inadvertence in this respect. The Doctor tells us that he pursued his

morning studies in utter nakedness, with the most beneficial results, for many summers, but he does not tell us the anecdote which I will relate. The philosopher was never in affluence, and having once received a bill of exchange from England for a moderate amount from a debtor of doubtful character, he had sent it to the neighbouring town to be presented for acceptance, and he was most anxious to learn whether his English correspondent's paper had been duly honoured. A friend going to the town undertook to inquire, and to let him know. He came home too late to communicate with the doctor that night ; but early the next morning Benjamin espied his friend's maid-servant tripping quickly across the Green towards his house with a letter in her hand. The long habit of remaining for hours without his clothes, and his extreme solicitude as to the fate of the bill, overpowered his consciousness. When the girl came within a few yards of his door, the venerable patriot eagerly rushed out, a second, or a third Adam, to meet her. She fled in terror, and ran screaming home.

'What is the matter ? Did you see the Doctor ?'

'Oh ! No ! Poor old gentleman ; we shall never see him again ; he has been barbarously murdered, no doubt ! The Indians got possession of the farther end of the village in the night ; the chief is in the poor Doctor's house, and as soon as he saw me he ran out, tomahawk in hand, to scalp me !'

To counteract absence of mind, and to obviate such unpleasant contingencies, it is prudent, as I soon discovered myself, and have already observed, not only to lock the door, but to adopt additional precautions. Females, it is notorious, have more presence of mind than we have ; therefore the charming, enthusiastic lady, who sat for three hours at a time, at the dawn of day, cooling her unprejudiced mutton, might not be subject to the like precipitancy, and to incur the like peril. To rush naked into the street, that she might welcome a long absent friend, would be an unpleasant mistake before the Return to Nature and innocence had been duly proclaimed at Temple Bar by naked heralds : even the day before. Except on my first visit, the dear children never appeared naked before me ; before Bysshe they often did. It is for his credit's sake that I state it. I was of the earth, earthy ; he was of the heaven, heavenly—I was a worldling ; he had already returned to nature, or rather he had never quitted her. He was a pure spirit, in the Divine likeness of the Archangel Gabriel ; the peace-breathing, lily-bearing, Annunciator. Whether the

charming lady might not, without tarnish or discredit, have appeared before him robed only in her innocence, as she was wont to sit during the early morning hours, I will not presume to determine ; it is, at all events, certain that she never did so.

Much has been said and written by wise men and by foolish ones on the subject of going naked ; it would not be to the purpose to repeat their arguments and conclusions, still less expedient would it be to discuss the matter anew ; but looking at the question without regard to moral, physical, or intellectual amelioration, but simply with a view to personal comfort, I will merely remark that the practice would not be convenient or agreeable. Shelley was powerfully attracted by every scheme tending towards improvement, to ethical progress, and human perfectibility ; and the attraction was more powerful in proportion as the scheme was novel, strange, and startling ; but he was not tempted to accept—and it is extraordinary that he was not—the project of virtuous and philanthropic nudity. It is fortunate, indeed, that he did not put it in practice in his own person, his absence and aberration of mind being totally over-powering—

and being transported
And rapt in secret studies,

he would probably have started off heedlessly some fine morning, and run through the streets of London, to a diplomatic conference with his father's bootless negotiators, or other appointment, the recollection of which had suddenly flashed across the mind of the naked student ; as the priests of old ran about Rome bare on the Lupercalia. Or peradventure the handsome young gymnosophist, being startled at his books by the sound of the meal-going bell, would have joined a party of female friends at the breakfast table, as wanting in all clothing, and as unconscious of the want as a new-born babe.

He thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated
To closeness, and the bettering of his mind,

was eminently unqualified to engage in so slippery and perilous an innovation.

There have always been, off and on, a considerable number of people doing the stays movement. This part of female apparel had many enemies at that period ; stays, it may be easily believed, found no favour with the advocates of nakedness. I heard much from them of the sin and danger of wear-

ing stays, and I listened patiently to many a fierce, angry diatribe against them. I was once taken to a lecture on stays, to be delivered by a first-rate, scientific Blue. She inhabited a large and handsome old house in a dull street, and an old-fashioned, obsolete part of the town. Scene the first was the dining-room ; it had been fitted up as a lecture-room. The audience was pretty numerous, and, with the sole exception of myself, consisted exclusively of females. I asked my fair conductress, by whose side I was seated, if it was quite proper for me to remain ? She commanded me to stay. ' You are a friend of our sex, and perfectly free from prejudices ! ' The latter part of the compliment I sensibly felt that I did not deserve. On a large table was a green cloth and on the cloth were plaster-casts, drawings and engravings, and a rabbit with its chest cut open, so that the lungs appeared. The lady lecturess came forward, and after a profound courtesy and gentle murmurs of applause, she began to discourse fluently, earnestly, and rather agreeably ; with extreme solemnity—with the gravity, indeed, of many professors. She addressed herself first to the casts, and, laying her hands upon them, expounded at length what may be called the upper works of woman. She then directed our attention to the deceased rabbit, pointing to different portions of the lungs, and explaining, or attempting to explain, the whole economy of respiration. She proved likewise, exceedingly well, that stays on the body of a rabbit would interfere with and impede its movements, and would be inconvenient and uncomfortable. Bundles of stays of different kinds were handed to her ; these she successively applied to the plaster-casts, and demonstrated how grievously they offended against every principle of anatomical science ; launching forth into an animated invective against busks, which, whether they were of wood, of whalebone, or of steel, found no quarter. She then exhibited pictures of crooked shoulders, distorted spines, contracted chests, and manifold deformities, painful to behold. She assured us, that all these calamities, and many others, were occasioned solely by the pernicious pressure of stays. The peroration was exceedingly impressive and authoritative ; she assured us, as if from revelation, that a benevolent Providence never intended the fairest of his creatures to be so strait-laced—to commit their captivating persons to devilish engines of torture and destruction.

The second scene was the drawing-room. The many had departed ; a select party, the chosen few, had been invited to

remain and take coffee. When I entered the room, I was placed, for cause of honour, upon the sofa, after the foreign fashion ; the lady of the house had resided much abroad, and presently she set herself down by my side. She said much in courteous phrase of the honour and pleasure, and so on, of my attendance.

' You heard my poor discourse, sir ; through your kindness, you heard it with attention. What do you really believe were the designs of Providence with respect to us females ; do you think that we were ever intended to wear stays ? Have I not fully demonstrated that we were not ? '

' To say the truth, madam, I do not very well know how to answer you : with respect to women, I am not competent to decide ; but I am fully convinced, and you demonstrated it completely, that Providence never meant that a buck rabbit should wear stays ! '

And indeed it was a buck ; what a terrible oversight. ' That is much to be regretted, on all accounts ; it ought most unquestionably to have been a doe ; it is a thousand pities ! '

A long silence ensued ; the poor lady was manifestly troubled about the sex of her anatomical subject.

When she had recovered herself, and conversation was resumed, it came out that Bysshe had promised faithfully to attend the lecture, but the traitor had faithlessly broken his engagement. His defection was deeply deplored. The lecturer spoke of him with animation and enthusiasm ; if he would once declare himself distinctly on the great, the momentous question, the distinct declaration of so great and influential a mind would instantly and finally determine it. Not another pair of stays would ever be sold, made, or worn in Europe !

Coffee was served ; I partook of it, it was excellent ; and when the guests had all been supplied, the philosopheress took a cup herself. A china cup containing a yellow powder was brought to her ; she took a teaspoonful of the powder, and stirred it into her coffee.

' Was it ginger, saffron, gold dust, the dust of the potable gold of the alchymists—what was it ? ' I ventured to inquire.

' No ; it was flour of mustard. I once had the honour and happiness to see the Great Frederick of Prussia take coffee at Potsdam, and he put flour of mustard into his coffee, as I have just done ; and therefore I have taken it thus ever since, in memory of so illustrious a man. He was once in a campaign

in Poland in a rainy season, and a marshy country, when he was attacked grievously, dangerously, by diarrhoea ; his ordinary medical attendants could not relieve him. " Was there no physician in the neighbourhood ? " " Yes, a celebrated one, but he is a Jew, and your Majesty would not like to consult him ". " Jew or Gentile, so that he can cure me, bring him here ! " The Polish physician prescribed flour of mustard in coffee ; the King took it immediately and freely, and the effect was rapid and beneficial. The Great Frederick was subject to such attacks, and therefore he persevered in using the remedy '.

' And are you subject to them ? '

Her temperament appeared to be dry and adust.

' No ! By no means ! But it is only a due tribute of respect for the memory of so great a man, that I should always take my coffee as I once saw him take his ! '

The whole soul of my ardent and imaginative young friend was inflamed at this period of his life, by a glowing desire to witness and to promote the improvement and progress of civil society. He had translated an essay, or treatise, of some French philosopher, on the Perfectibility of the Human Species ; and he read his translation aloud to me, as well as the writings of other authors on the same fanciful subject. A state of things was fast approaching, we were assured, in which mankind, having become perfectly virtuous, the sanction of laws, as well as all binding contracts and agreements, would no longer be required. It would be fortunate and happy, indeed, if the accession of this complete change and entire amelioration were true, or even probable. A man might then lend ten or fifty thousand pounds to a friend, or even to any stranger, at four per cent., or on any other terms, without the trouble and delay of executing mortgages, or bonds, or other securities ; without the wearisome investigation of intricate titles ; without the dull, tedious, and expensive formalities of lawyers. And so it would be with all other transactions whatever, no other safeguard than that of triumphant and universally prevailing virtue ought ever to be looked for. Marriage, of course, would be on the same easy, but secure, footing as all other agreements. So far as it is a civil contract, this might very well be, if all men and all women were perfectly true, honourable, and virtuous. Nobody affected to believe that such a condition of affairs actually existed ; but that it would soon arrive, some well-meaning persons confidently asserted, and seemed to credit it.

I met with certain of the advocates of the coming perfectibility worthy, but somewhat credulous people : the men discoursed of its influence over all human affairs, the women treated it principally with reference to those matters which most nearly concern themselves. I listened to observations and conversations which to me, doubting of the blessed advent, were laughable.

One example will suffice : I went to drink coffee and tea, to listen to conversation more or less instructive, and to music, and to enjoy all such innocent recreations as are not inconsistent with perfectibility, at the handsome house of a very hospitable and agreeable perfectible. In the course of the evening a lady stole into the room, and took her seat on a solitary sofa opposite ; she was a most lovely creature, in every respect, and I expressed my admiration of her in no measured terms to the lady of the house, with whom I was conversing, as I had supposed, in confidence, and under the belief that what I had said was to go no farther. After a little while, the lady of the house crossed the room, sat down by the side of her lovely guest, and conversed earnestly with her, both the ladies occasionally looking at me. Afterwards, a signal was made that I was to approach ; I obeyed it. The lady of the house then told the fair stranger, word for word, all that I had said about her, pausing from time to time, and asking me if I had not said so. It was impossible to deny it. ' Well, sir ', said the stranger lady, with a certain gracious gravity, when she had heard all my praises, and I had confirmed them, ' your homage is accepted, and when the perfectibility of the human race is accomplished, you shall be made happy '. ' Thank you, Madam ', I answered, somewhat impertinently, I fear ; ' and when the Millennium commences, we will go and reside in the New Jerusalem ; we will hire a handsome first-floor in a commodious house, hollowed out of one huge emerald, and live together in it ! ' She frowned at this harmless jest, but made no reply. I did not think that so rare a beauty could have looked so black, and withdrew in manifest anger.

A few days after our conversation, she related what I had said to Bysshe, adding, ' Your friend is a very strange person indeed ; it is quite plain that he does not believe in the perfectibility of the human race. How unaccountable ! and indeed he seems to make it the sole business of his life to scoff at everything ! '

' How could you think of living with her in a house carved

out of an emerald ? ' he inquired with his saddest look and in his most plaintive voice, when he told me this.

I answered, ' We read in the Book of Revelation that each of the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem was a pearl, and one foundation of the walls was a topaz, another an amethyst, and so on ; and consequently it did not seem too much to expect that when the number of the elect has been accomplished, and what she promised me is to take place, I might easily hire such apocalyptic apartments for us to live in together, as I proposed to her '.

He looked grave, and said mournfully, ' You laugh at everything ! I am convinced that there can be no entire regeneration of mankind until laughter is put down ! '.

On that point at least we were agreed.

The poetic temperament is naturally melancholy, the poet's airy realms being thickly peopled by imaginary sorrows ; and Shelley's natural melancholy had been confirmed and increased by manifold crosses, vexations, and disappointments ; yet occasionally he could be merry, notwithstanding the strong aversion for laughter and ridicule which he habitually and vehemently expressed. He could indulge in a mirthful sally ; he could play joyous, funny pranks, and could relate or even act them over again, in a vivacious manner, and with a keen relish and agreeable recollections of his own mischievous raillery. His frolics were ever peculiar and characteristic ; their nature will be best explained and illustrated by an example :

One summer's evening he had to travel a short distance in his own country, in the county of Sussex—such, if I mistake not, for I know the adventure only from Bysshe's account of it, was the scene of his whimsical exploit. He set out on foot, expecting that the stage would soon overtake him. He had not proceeded far when the heavy coach came up. There was no room outside, but the six inside seats were unoccupied ; he got in, and the vehicle rumbled along the dusty road. For a little while it was all very well, but the heavy stage coach stopped suddenly, and a heavy old woman came in to him, reddened with heat, steaming and running down with perspiration. She took her place in the middle seat, like a huge ass between a pair of enormous panniers ; for, on one side was a mighty basket, crammed full of mellow apples, and on the other a like basket, equally well filled with large onions. The odour of the apples and the onions, and the aspect

of the heated, melting, smoking old woman, were intolerable to the delicate, sensitive young poet. He bore it, at first, patiently, then impatiently, at last he could endure it no longer ; so, starting up, he seated himself on the floor of the coach, and, fixing his tearful, woeful eyes upon her, he addressed his companion thus, in thrilling accents :

For heaven's sake, let us sit upon the ground,
And tell sad stories of the death of kings !
How some have been deposed, some slain in war,
Some haunted by the ghosts they dispossessed ;
Some poisoned by their wives ; some sleeping killed,
All murdered !

' Oh, dear ! ' exclaimed the terrified old woman. ' Dear ! dear ! Oh, Lord ! Oh, Lord ! '

But when he shrieked out the two last words, ' All murdered ! ' she ran to the window in an agony, and, thrusting out her head, cried :

' Oh, guard, guard ! stop ! Oh, guard, guard, guard ! let me out ! '

The door was opened, she alighted immediately with her strong-smelling wares, and through the united wit of two great poets, that of Shakespeare and his own, he was permitted to finish his journey alone.

He was proud of this achievement, and delighted in it long afterwards.

' Show us, Bysshe, how you got rid of the old woman in Sussex '.

He sprang wildly on his feet, and, taking his seat on the floor, with a melancholy air, and in a piteous voice, cried out :

For heaven's sake, let us sit upon the ground !

When he had given out the words, ' All murdered ! ' with a fiendish yell, he started up, threw open the window, and began to call, ' Guard ! guard ! ' often, to the astonishment of persons passing by, whose temperament was less poetic, and less excitable than his own.

So moving were the woes of the gentle Richard Plantagenet, told by the great dramatist, and declaimed by another poet, second to him, at least in time ! So drastic was their effect !

Quitting the Swan of Avon, and the Swan of the Arun, and of Warnham mere, we will return for a moment to the lovely and indignant lady.

Some months after the huge emerald had proved to be a

stone of offence and a stumbling-block in the way to her good graces, I met her alone in Orchard Street ; she was exceedingly handsome by daylight, but less handsome than she had appeared by candlelight ; the tell-tale summer's sun showed brown or yellow hues. It struck me that the emerald mansion would not be becoming to her complexion ; it would be preferable to reside in a ruby, or a topaz. She received me graciously, shaking hands cordially ; and we walked round Portman Square together. To say the truth, I met her again soon after my first disaster, and, as a Christian, I desired to live and to die in peace with her. Accordingly, when she was quite alone, I ventured to creep up to her, and, sitting down softly by her side, humbly to address her. I said nothing of her transcendent beauty, which had been the cause of my original discomfiture, and had brought down upon my head the odious and opprobrious appellation of a scoffer ; nor of the progress of mankind towards perfection, of which I doubted ; but I spoke of indifferent subjects only ; of chess, of cards, of quadrille. At first, certainly, she was somewhat crusty, treating me as an Infidel ought always to be treated, but she softened by degrees.

' Well ! Have you made it up ? ' the lady of the house asked, as she walked past us, and saw us conversing together in a friendly manner.

' We never had anything to make up ', answered the lovely lady, obligingly ; ' we never had any quarrel ! '

She spoke much of Shelley, and in such terms that, had we been old and bitter enemies, we should have been at once reconciled. She spoke also of him whilst we were walking round the square, and with so great warmth, admiration, and enthusiasm, that the yellow tints on her skin rapidly and completely disappeared, and I thought she would look perfectly charming even in the emerald messuage.

' I was talking about him with a female friend the other day, that he is so modest, so reserved, so pure, so virtuous,

A clear, immaculate, and silver fountain !

and we were saying what terrible havoc he would make, if he were at all rakish ! '

' If he were less modest, he would be less attractive, and therefore less dangerous '.

' Yes, it would be so. But that did not occur to us '.

'I wonder it did not, for it is sufficiently obvious'.

'Have you seen him lately?'

'Have you?'

There were many mutual inquiries.

'Does he not visit you then?'

'I wish he did; I would gladly, oh, so gladly, give half of all I possess, if he were an habitual, I will add even an occasional visitor! Cannot you bring him to me? Will you?'

'I will try'.

'You said you wish to learn quadrille; we will teach you. My mother, my sister, and myself have lived much in Spain, where alone they understand the game: quadrille is well played there. If you can excuse our not playing for money, which we never do, we will play with you whenever you choose'.

'To learn so difficult a game as quadrille demands much leisure, and I have none'.

'That is a pity, for it is well worth learning! However, you will come and see me?'

'It must be after my return to London, because I am going into the country to-morrow, for some months'.

'Whenever you please; but bring him with you'.

In one respect only is the long vacation too long; on every other account I have invariably found it too short. The absence from London is so long, that it causes a disruption of studies, pursuits, and acquaintances; of acquaintances that might have ripened into valuable friendships.

When I returned to town in November, the recollection of my obliging instructress in quadrille had faded, and Bysshe and myself were so ungrateful as to forget the lovely perfectible! The precise nature of the perfect felicity which was promised to the elect, and was to be enjoyed by them, when the perfectibility of the human species was accomplished, I never discovered. It certainly was not that kind of felicity that one would at first infer from the lax, ambiguous manner of talking in use among zealous votaries. It was something ethereal, spiritualized, transcendent, remote from the gratifications of the senses, and the grossness of mortal frailty—a certain celestial joy. In truth, my curiosity did not stimulate me to inquire minutely into the conditions of a state of society, in which I did not myself believe.

During his residence of some weeks or months in Half Moon Street, Bysshe was happy and comfortable—comfortable

according to his own peculiar scheme of life. There were few shelves for books in the little sitting-room on the first-floor ; but books accumulated rapidly, and they were arranged in rows on the floor, in the recesses on each side of the fireplace ; and they were piled in disorder on tables and chairs, and heaped up under tables in confusion. Many books had been left behind, through a miserable negligence and inconceivable rapidity of movement and evolutions, in localities from whence they never emerged, and were never seen or heard of more. If he possessed the faculty of losing volumes without number, he had the power also to assemble around him again, in a few days, a respectable library. In one recess remained, but little disturbed by any of us, in a long row, a Latin edition, or translation, of the works of Emmanuel Kant. It was comprised in I know not how many volumes ; they were in boards, and were uncut, and unopened. Of these, the young metaphysician had been most anxious to obtain possession, but he totally neglected them obtained. I do not believe that he ever read a single page of the transcendental philosopher. I took up a volume myself occasionally, and attempted to get through a few pages, but I did not make any progress. I found in the mystical dogmatism nothing attractive in any respect, but, on the contrary, much to repel me. The only remark which I recollect to have made was that the word 'purus' occurred many times in every page, and in every case, gender, and number.

The Kantian philosophy was much in vogue at that time, but I never found an adept who was able to explain to me the meaning of that which of myself, and without the advantage and assistance of oral instruction, it was totally impossible to comprehend. Harriet's power of reading aloud were in full force, and were often brought into requisition. *Rocheby* had lately appeared, a poor performance, at which the critics laughed unmercifully ; but the fair reader was pleased with it, and read it aloud more than once throughout.

There were a few pleasing passages, pretty descriptions, and good lines interspersed, here and there, with much fluent commonplace verse and book-making. I listened with attention, but I could never make out the story either of that poem, or of the other poems of the same fertile author, which I heard from the same lips. Scene after scene passes over the mind, like a dream, and no permanent or distinct impression is left behind by the flitting shadows.

Finding myself in the neighbourhood of Rokeby some years afterwards, I remembered enough of what I had heard to be induced to visit the spot. It repaid a ride, and was well worth the deviation from my direct course. The confluence of the Greta and the Tees is pleasing, perhaps even striking. Bysshe was sometimes able to give his attention for a little while to the reading, which flowed on easily in a continuous, unbroken stream, like the versification of the Poet of the Scottish Border ; he then suddenly started off, and returned, and heard a little more ; the uninspired and uninspiring strains still trickling down, like the waters of the Greta in their rocky bed. It may seem, that the many fits and many bouts of linked readings, long drawn out, must have been wearisome, but they were not so ; the good Harriet read well, clearly, distinctly, in an agreeable voice, and with a just accent and emphasis ; but the principal charm of these performances was, that they were so delightful to the performer, she enjoyed herself so much in the healthy exercise of the chest, that it would have been churlish indeed not to have lent a patient ear.

'Come, sit down, be quite still ; do not walk about the room, as Bysshe does ; be silent, and attend to me ; do not ask any foolish questions ! When I come to anything that I think you cannot understand, I will explain it to you myself !'

Not to humour her would have been inhuman, it would have been impossible. Shelley was visited occasionally by a few agreeable and by some tolerably agreeable acquaintances, chiefly of a literary description ; whom to write at length would be tedious. As the author of another equally uninspired, but more popular, more extensively and permanently popular poem, than *Rokeby*, '*Propria quæ maribus*', truly sings concerning nouns of anomalous and irregular genders. One of these visitors may be named, the Chevalier Lawrence, a Knight of Malta, who had lately reached some celebrity by his novel, *The Empire of the Nairs*. He had resided long in the Court of some small German potentate, and related anecdotes that were amusing enough of the courts and literature of Germany. He spoke much of nobility, to which in his capacity of a Knight of Malta, he had devoted himself ; and of some work, which he had written concerning the nobles of England, proving that the real English nobles are not the peers of the realm, as is universally, but erroneously, believed, but the old families of landed gentry ; and this, taking nobility in a continental sense, and according to continental notions, is strictly true.

I never fell in with the discourse of nobility—I do not know even its proper title: with his great work, upon which his immortality rests, *The Empire of the Nairs*, I could not get on, although I tried to read it more than once; it was too roseate, too much like the amatory honey-dew of Tommy Moore. To my young friends the Indian tale was attractive; they read it; and even Eliza, who never read anything else, read it, and declared, in an audible voice, that it was quite delightful. Gracious Heaven! What would Miss Warne say?

I saw a great deal of Bysshe during his residence in the quiet, convenient street, which unquestionably, however paradoxical it may seem, suited him better than the mountains of Wales or Cumberland.

'If the man in the moon be a queer fellow, what are we to make of the man in the Half-Moon?'

'The man in the moon!' he said, in a piteous voice; 'the man in the moon!' And having looked on the moon imploringly for some time, he asked: 'Do you really believe there is a man in the moon? More than one?' He then sighed deeply, exclaiming, 'Poor fellow!'

I sat with him, read with him, walked with him, talked with him; and that there might be no limit to my self-devotion, I dined with him.

As we travel now-a-days through London in a cab, a vehicle unknown in the days of which I write, through devious ways and unheard-of streets, known only to cabmen and their associates, the fairies; in like manner did I walk with Bysshe then. I always let him lead the way, and followed his guidance: his course and choice of direction were erratic and uncommon, and he would dart across the road and quickly enter some unpromising, ill-omened street or passage, and hurry me along it: I have often wondered by what impulse he was thus borne along. His flight was to escape from, not to pursue; to get away from some object for which he had conceived a sudden dislike.

To return to dinner. At the bare proposal to order dinner, poor Shelley stood aghast, in speechless trance; when he had somewhat recovered from the outrage to his feelings, 'Ask Harriet', he shrilly cried, with a desponding, supplicating mien. The good Harriet herself was no proficient in culinary arts; she had never been initiated in the mysteries of housewifery: 'Whatever you please', was her ordinary answer.

I was once staying at the house of a country clergyman;

the worthy pastor was eminently skilled in divine things ; his not less worthy wife was deeply conversant with human affairs, well versed in all the learning of the kitchen, excellent in ordering the genial board, as became the helpmate of a first-rate theologian. There were usually a few neighbours, guests at dinner. Amongst these, one day, was a lovely young woman ; 'healthy, comely, fair, and plump ; the daughter of a substantial farmer of a superior degree.

When the visitors had departed, my kind and notable hostess asked me in confidence what I thought of the handsome, well-fleshed girl ?

'I think that she is a beautiful creature ! I have seldom seen a prettier young woman of the kind !'

'She is, indeed, and she is as good as she is beautiful—so useful in a house'.

'I had heard much about her, but I never saw her before ; and I am satisfied that all I heard about her is true. I have had a great deal of talk with her ; she seems to understand everything, and to be wonderfully clever in a family. I could not take my eyes off her all the evening ; I am afraid she would think me rude, but I could not help it !' 'She is so beautiful, it is very difficult to help looking at her ; it is not easy to take one's eyes off her !' 'No ! It is not indeed ! I sat looking at her, and thinking what delightful jellies she would make ; I could not help looking at her, and saying to myself, how I should like to taste her calves'-foot jelly. And I longed to tell her so !'

Poor Harriet had pledged herself at Keswick to learn of Mrs. Southey to make tea cakes ; but Mrs. Southey would not teach, or Harriet would not learn, and she had not redeemed her pledge. It was her only chance, and she lost it, which was unfortunate : it would have been a green spot in a desert. To say, 'Whatever you please', is a sorry mode of ordering dinner, and it was all she ever said on that head. Some considerable time after the appointed hour, a roasted shoulder of mutton, of the coarsest, toughest grain, graced, or disgraced, the ill-supplied table ; the watery gravy that issued from the perverse joint, when it was cut, a duty commonly assigned to me, seemed the most apt of all things to embody the conception of penury and utter destitution. There were potatoes in every respect worthy of the mutton ; and the cheese, which was either forgotten or uncatable, closed the ungenial repast. Sometimes there was a huge boiled leg of mutton, boiled till the

bone was ready to drop out of the meat, which shrank and started from it on all sides, without any sauce, but with turnips raw, and manifestly unworthy to be boiled any longer. Sometimes there were impregnable beef-steaks—soles for shooting-shoes. I have dropped a word, a hint, about a pudding; a pudding, Bysshe said dogmatically, is a prejudice. I have wished that the converse of the proposition were true, and that a prejudice was a pudding, and then, according to the judgment of my more enlightened young friends, I should never have been without one.

It is a strong proof of the extraordinary fascination of the society of the Divine Poet, that to purchase it—and it was absolutely requisite to pay a price—I submitted cheerfully so often, and for such a long period, to so many inconveniences and privations. I was never indifferent to the amenities of life; I had always been accustomed to comfort—to a certain elegance, indeed: at college, in preparing for college, and more especially at home; for in a district where the creature comforts were well cared for, my own family were always conspicuous for an exact and exquisite nicety. In this respect, as in some others, there was something contradictory in Shelley: he emphatically—I may say ostentatiously—renounced whatever might be stigmatized by a morose philosopher of Spartan habits and principles as luxury; and yet, like the majority of mankind, he appeared to be best pleased when he was most at his ease. He continually and openly lamented his rude and tyrannical extrusion from Oxford; and it was manifest that he was unconsciously sensible of the loss of innumerable commodities; he secretly pined for he knew not what; in truth, he pined for the flesh-pots of Egypt; for the leeks, and the onions, and the water-melons. At that University, behold with reverence the rare wisdom of our forefathers! a man was compelled to live comfortably whether he would or not, and in spite of himself.

Bysshe's dietary was frugal and independent; very remarkable and quite peculiar to himself. When he felt hungry he would dash into the first baker's shop, buy a loaf and rush out again, bearing it under his arm; and he strode onwards in his rapid course, breaking off pieces of bread and greedily swallowing them. But however frugal the fare, the waste was considerable, and his path might be tracked, like that of Hop-o'-my-Thumb through the wood, in Mother Goose her tale, by a long line of crumbs.

The spot, where he sat reading, or writing, and eating his dry bread, was likewise marked out by a circle of crumbs and fragments scattered on the floor. He took with bread, frequently by way of condiment, not water-cresses, as did the Persians of old, according to the fable of Xenophon, but common pudding raisins. These he purchased at some mean little shop, that he might be the more speedily served ; and he carried them loose in his waistcoat-pocket, and eat them with his dry bread. He occasionally rolled up little pellets of bread, and, in a sly, mysterious manner, shot them with his thumb, hitting the persons—whom he met in his walks—on the face, commonly on the nose, at which he grew to be very dexterous.

When he was dining at a coffee-house, he would sometimes amuse himself thus, if that could be an amusement, which was done unconsciously. A person receiving an unceremonious fillip on the nose, after this fashion, started and stared about ; but I never found that anybody, although I was often apprehensive, that some one might resent it, perceived or suspected from what quarter the offending missile had come. The wounded party seemed to find satisfaction in gazing upwards at the ceiling, and in the belief that a piece of plaster had fallen from thence. When he was eating his bread alone over his book he would shoot his pellets about the room, taking aim at a picture, at an image, or at any other object which attracted his notice. He had been taught by a French lady to make panada ; and with this food he often indulged himself. His simple cookery was performed thus. He broke a quantity—often, indeed, a surprising quantity—of bread into a large bason, and poured boiling water upon it. When the bread had been steeped awhile, and had swelled sufficiently, he poured off the water, squeezing it out of the bread, which he chopped up with a spoon ; he then sprinkled pounded loaf sugar over it, and grated nutmeg upon it, and devoured the mass with a prodigious relish. He was standing one day in the middle of the room, bason in hand, feeding himself voraciously, gorging himself with pap.

‘ Why, Bysshe ’, I said, ‘ you lap it up as greedily as the Valkyriæ in Scandinavian story lap up the blood of the slain ! ’

‘ Aye ! ’ he shouted out, with grim delight, ‘ I lap up the blood of the slain ! ’

The idea captivated him ; he was continually repeating the words ; and he often took panada, I suspect, merely to

indulge this wild fancy, and say, 'I am going to lap up the blood of the slain! To sup up the gore of murdered kings!'

Having previously fed himself after his fashion from his private stores, he was independent of dinner, and quite indifferent to it; the slice of tough mutton would remain untouched upon his plate, and he would sit at table reading some book, often reading aloud, seemingly unconscious of the hospitable rites in which others were engaged, his bread bullets meanwhile being discharged in every direction.

The provisions supplied at lodgings in London were too frequently in those days detestable, and the service which was rendered abominable and disgusting. Meat was procured wherever meat might be bought most cheaply, in order that, being paid for dearly, a more enormous profit might be realized upon it; and those dishes were selected in which the ignorance in cookery of a servant-of-all-work might be least striking.

Our dinners, therefore, were constructive, a dumb show, a mere empty, idle ceremony; our only resource against absolute starvation was tea. 'We will have some muffins and crumpets for tea', the famished Harriet would say. 'They will butter them!' Bysshe exclaimed, in a voice thrilling with horror. Harriet sometimes ordered them privily, without consulting him; and when they were brought in silently, and appeared smiling upon the tea-table, he dealt with them as remorselessly as with Mrs. Southey's tea-cakes at Keswick. We meekly sought relief in buttered toast; but the butter was too commonly bad, and ill-suited to our palates, but answering admirably the final cause of making the toast; that not being relished in the parlour, there might be more left for the unclean maid to eat. Penny buns were our assured resource. The survivors of those days of peril and hardship are indebted for their existence to the humane interposition and succour of penny buns. A shilling's worth of penny buns for tea. If the purchase was entrusted to the maid, she got such buns as none could believe to have been made on earth, proving thereby incontestably that the girl had some direct communication with the infernal regions, where alone they could have been procured. Shelley was fond of penny buns, but he never bought them unless he was put up to it.

'Get a shilling's worth of penny buns, Bysshe', Harriet

said, 'at some good confectioner's', the situation of whose shop she described.

He rushed out with incredible alacrity, like a Wind God, and in an instant returned, and was heard stumbling and tumbling up stairs, with the bag of buns, open at the top, in his hand ; and he would sometimes, in his hot haste, drop them on the stairs, and they all rolled down to the bottom, and he picked them up again ; but we were not particular. We had our own tea ; it usually lay spread out on an open paper upon a side table ; others might help themselves, and probably they did so, but there was always some left for us.

Such was the Poetic Life ! But, ah, sweet youth, how soon it fades ! All these privations and miseries were then as nothing. They were the salt of life, and surely we associated with the salt of the earth. To say the truth, I love a good penny bun to this hour ; I look upon one with gratitude, as a friend in need, with emotion, as my preserver ! The faculty of inducing his friends, and particularly myself, to undergo losses, derangements, and annoyances many and various, for the sake of his instructive and fascinating company, was certainly remarkable enough, but it was trifling indeed—a slight exercise of the authority of talents and genius, in comparison with another and most astonishing power over the minds and souls and conduct of others, which he now and then unintentionally, and—as it were unconsciously, put forth.

The conversation of the Divine Poet was found to be especially attractive and enchanting by all females, particularly by the young and intellectual. He never was inclined to go to bed ; it may be truly affirmed that he never went to bed ; he was sent to bed, taken to bed, put to bed, but he never retired to rest of his own accord and voluntarily. He was commonly most communicative, unreserved, and eloquent and enthusiastic, when those around him were inclining to yield to the influence of sleep, or rather at the hour when they would have been disposed to seek their chambers but for the bewitching charms of his discourse. If he was in company with two or three young ladies at bed-time, they would continue to sit with him, hearing him and asking him questions. He took no note of time, and never thought of retiring himself, and the quiet hours of night glided away like moments ; they remained—female doctors disputing with him in the temple of wisdom and virtue, until some one of the fair audience, recol-

lecting herself at last, exclaimed in a pause of the animated conversation :

‘ Well, but it is time to go to bed ; surely it must be late ! ’

‘ Gracious goodness ! It is five o’clock—it is six o’clock in the morning ! ’

‘ It cannot be ; it is impossible. There must be some mistake ! ’

‘ No ; there is not. Hark ! it is striking six ! How incredible ! How quickly the time has passed ! It is wonderful ! There is no use in going to bed now ; we must remain as we are. We will have breakfast as soon as we can. I am hungry ! It is a fine, bright morning ; let us take a turn in the garden ; it will refresh us ! ’

And so the debate was adjourned, the conclave was broken up at the crowing of the cock, and the proceedings terminated with a walk and breakfast.

We, that are of purer fire,
Imitate the starry quire,
Who in their nightly watchful spheres
Lead in sweet round the months and years.

It has happened that he had only one female disciple during the watches of the night, and the winged hours sped not less rapidly in interesting, engrossing debate. In two or three instances I have heard there was a noise about it, but most assuredly without other foundation than that such nocturnal consultations are unusual.

When the irresistible force of attraction was known, the old birds drove the young ones to their nests ; the old hen sent the pullets to roost ; and this was most readily effected by hunting the sorcerer to his chamber : the old bores despatched the young Adonis to bed, and then they might dispose of every widowed Venus as they would.

In the *Lives of the Saints*, some acts, we are told, are set forth for example’s sake, and that they may be universally imitated ; others for edification only ; others neither for example or edification, but solely as marvels to be wondered at, and in order to demonstrate the infinite power of the supreme disposer of all things.

This strange social anomaly, of the occurrence of which the parties were totally unconscious at the time, is not adduced with the recommendation, ‘ Go and do likewise ’, but to exemplify a wonderful charm, a potent spell, that, as far as I

am able to discover, was never exercised by any other individual, however gifted. To me, observing the precise and sometimes painful punctuality with which ladies hasten to bed, this spiritual magnetism of my incomparable young friend has appeared the more astounding.

I have frequently wondered that the most inspiring conversation, the most interesting volume, the most ravishing music, the most critical situation at chess, has always proved less attractive than a bedroom candlestick, which, even in the best appointed houses, is commonly but a scurvy utensil. Nothing is ever engaging enough at the prescribed moment of departure to obtain even the brief respite of five minutes. We must except the stupid animal pastime of dancing, and this, when it once sets in, it is hardly possible to confine within moderate limits. What in the world did Bysshe say to his charmed and charming young watchwomen? I have often essayed—perhaps with a profane hand, and therefore in vain—to raise the veil that covered the face of the mystical Isis; my attempts were uniformly abortive. I have frequently inquired of my friend: ‘What were you talking about all the long night, Bysshe, with your attendant fairies? Pray, what were you telling them?’ He stared, and was perplexed; he did not, and could not, inform me. He had no concealments, since nothing remained for him to tell; the whole had passed away. Had he been then a mere conduit-pipe—a channel to convey pure streams from sources higher and nearer to heaven than even his own spotless mind? I have asked again and again the fair interlocutresses for some samples of the nightly dialogues, but I never obtained more than general expressions of vague delight. A tall, hard-featured, middle-aged man, impatiently forcing his way through the crowd that commonly impedes the passage along Westminster Bridge, was once pointed out to me as the famous Walking Stewart—as the man who had walked all over India and the far East, and every step of the way from the East Indies to London, save only the passage over some rivers and the little bit of sea, which separates Calais from Dover. I have often thought of this celebrated pedestrian in conjunction with my friend’s nocturnal disquisitions. The connection is not obvious; but it may be shortly explained. William Godwin told me that he knew Stewart well, and that he was worth knowing, because, without knowing him, nobody could possibly have any idea what a bore really was.

His chief delight was to walk at the rate of five miles an hour straight on end as long as it was light. In the evening he sought literary and scientific conversation, and the commerce of wits. He had lodgings somewhere near Westminster Hall ; and on a fixed day of the week he gave a conversation party ; and for that purpose he hired a spacious room at one of the coffee-houses round Palace Yard. The room was large, but the attendance was small, in spite of all his efforts to collect visitors, and moreover the affair was but dull. He complained to William Godwin, ' You and the other great Wits of the day seldom come to my evening parties, and I know why you do not come. It is because you are afraid that the good things which you say will be lost ; but I assure you, you are mistaken. Not a single word will be thrown away ; nothing will be lost. I have taken effectual precautions to prevent it. I have engaged twelve eminent shorthand writers ; they are placed behind screens in different parts of the room, very judiciously posted. They take down whatever they hear, and report it to myself ; nothing can escape them. So fear not ; not a word will be lost ; talk your best ! '

These arrangements having been made generally known, the attendance became thinner, the conversation tighter, and the shorthand writers' reports more meagre. ' For if there be anything in the world ', William Godwin concluded, ' that can effectually seal up a man's lips, it is the assurance that every word a man utters in private conversation will be written down and recorded against him ! '

I have often wished—vainly wished—that one at least of the twelve shorthand writers had been placed behind a screen during Bysshe's nightly colloquies, to catch and secure for ever on paper a philosophical apocalypse, of which the duration was unhappily so transient. What a delightful and precious appendix to an imperfect biography would the notes of the shorthand writers afford ! Shelley was given to sit up all night, and he often practised it. I have sometimes sat up with him, reading, conversing, drinking tea, playing at chess. The achievement is much less serious than persons, who have not made the experiment, would suppose. The night soon passes away ; its duration indeed is but short. Nobody thinks of going to bed before twelve, it would be too early ; at twelve the night commences. Nobody would go to bed at five, it would be too late ; at five it is light—it is time to go out and take a walk ; at five the night ceases. Five hours

practically comprehend the whole night, except during the depth of winter, a portion of the year which none would select for keeping watch. To take a part of the day with which people in general are more conversant : a man who has dined at four comes home at six from his evening saunter. He looks over the newspaper, has tea at seven, plays at chess, at cards ; reads a light book, listens to music, or takes a part in it. How soon is it eleven o'clock ; and so quietly and quickly passes away the night from twelve to five, being a like space of five hours.

It may be fit to remark here, that I have always designated the distinguished person of whom I have often spoken, and shall often have occasion to speak, as William Godwin. Shelley called him shortly, Godwin ; but I was not sufficiently intimate with him to justify the use of so familiar a title. In speaking of him to his own original, peculiar friends and associates, I have at first said, ' Mr. Godwin ' ; but I was instantly corrected—I may perhaps say snubbed—by the emendation, ' William Godwin, you mean '. It was much as if I had spoken of a Quaker to Quakers, and adopted, to their discomfiture, terms implying creature-worship. His primary destination and proper occupation was minister in some congregation of Protestant dissenters, of what denomination I know not, being myself totally ignorant on the subject of religious dissent ; and he escaped service on juries, in parochial offices, and the like burthens, by returning himself to the last as a dissenting minister. As there is no great danger of a revolt in this instance, the prejudices of caste may be respected, and the Brahmin may receive his proper appellation of William Godwin.

Shelley told me, when he was at Oxford, that shortly before he came to the university he had taken poison for love of a young lady who had refused his hand. He had swallowed a large dose of arsenic, but his stomach rejected it, and he threw it up, or the principal part of it ; and he described various distressing symptoms as vividly as if he was really suffering from the effects of the corrosive and deleterious metal ; but it was purely imaginary. He frequently discoursed poetically, pathetically, and with fervid melancholy fancies of suicide ; but I do not believe that he ever contemplated seriously and practically the perpetration of the crime. It was not at all in accordance with his principles. He suffered occasionally from certain painful infirmities ; but his stamina were sound, his

constitution and general health good. He coughed at times violently, as many others cough, especially after some imprudent exposure ; and his whole life, so far as regards the care and preservation of his health, was but one imprudence. He coughed violently, and sometimes felt a pain in his side and chest, and he called it spasms. He coughed, and declared that he broke blood-vessels and spat blood. I have heard him cough, and seen him spit, but I never observed, although I watched him narrowly, that he voided any blood. He was encouraged in these chimeras, and in the most unfounded notion of being consumptive, by persons who thought that they had an interest in his bad health, and who trafficked and made a profit of their own pretended ailments.

There was a coarse, fat woman, who used to sponge upon him unmercifully under pretence of breaking blood-vessels. It was said, that her lungs were her stock in trade ; that she got three hundred a-year by her broken blood-vessels, receiving, as it were, compensation to that amount at least from the credulously charitable.

'Poor Matilda', that was not quite the name, he said to me, one day, horror-stricken with trembling compassion, 'poor Matilda has broken a blood-vessel, and is spitting blood !'

'Poor Matilda', I answered, 'has broken the cheese-toaster, and is spitting toasted cheese !'

He thought me very inhuman, I am sure, but he laughed ; in truth, the woman was only drunk all the time. He coloured and laughed, but relieved her, and she continued to spit blood and to sponge upon the poor fellow, and, in every sense of the word, to spoil him.

In a crowded stage-coach Shelley once happened to sit opposite an old woman with very thick legs, who, as he imagined, was afflicted with elephantiasis, an exceedingly rare and most terrible disease, in which the legs swell and become as thick as those of an elephant, together with many other distressing symptoms, as the thickening and cracking of the skin, and indeed a whole Iliad of woes, of which he had recently read a formidable description in some medical work, that had taken entire possession of his fanciful and impressible soul. The patient, quite unconscious of her misery, sat dozing quietly over against him. He also took it into his head that the disease is very infectious, and that he had caught it of his corpulent and drowsy fellow-traveller ; he presently began to discover unequivocal symptoms of the fearful contagion

in his own person. I never saw him so thoroughly unhappy as he was, whilst he continued under the influence of this strange and unaccountable impression. His female friends tried to laugh him out of his preposterous whim, bantered him and inquired, how he came to find out that his fair neighbour had such thick legs ? He did not relish, or even understand, their jests, but sighed deeply. By the advice of his friends, he was prevailed upon to consult a skilful and experienced surgeon, and submitted to a minute and careful examination : the surgeon of course assured him, that no signs or trace of elephantiasis could be discerned. He further informed him, that the disease is excessively rare, almost unknown, in this part of the world ; that it is not infectious, and that a person really afflicted by it could not bear to travel in a crowded stage-coach. Bysshe shook his head, sighed still more deeply, and was more thoroughly convinced than ever, that he was the victim of a cruel and incurable disease ; and that these assurances were only given with the humane design of soothing one doomed to a miserable and inevitable death. His imagination was so much disturbed, that he was perpetually examining his own skin, and feeling and looking at that of others. One evening, during the access of his fancied disorder, when many young ladies were standing up for a country dance, he caused a wonderful consternation amongst these charming creatures by walking slowly along the row of girls and curiously surveying them, placing his eyes close to their necks and bosoms, and feeling their breasts and bare arms, in order to ascertain whether any of the fair ones had taken the horrible disease. He proceeded with so much gravity and seriousness, and his looks were so woe-begone, that they did not resist, or resent, the extraordinary liberties, but looked terrified, and as if they were about to undergo some severe surgical operation at his hands. Their partners were standing opposite in silent and angry amazement, unable to decide in what way the strange manipulations were to be taken ; yet nobody interrupted his heart-broken handlings, which seemed, from his dejected air, to be preparatory to cutting his own throat. At last the lady of the house perceived what the young philosopher was about, and by assuring him that not one of the young ladies, as she had herself ascertained, had been infected, and, with gentle expostulations, induced him to desist, and to suffer the dancing to proceed without further examinations.

The monstrous delusion continued for some days ; with the aspect of grim despair he came stealthily and opened the bosom of my shirt several times a day, and minutely inspected my skin, shaking his head, and by his distressed mien plainly signifying that he was not by any means satisfied with the state of my health. He also quietly drew up my sleeves, and by rubbing it investigated the skin of my arms ; he also measured my legs and ankles, spanning them with a convulsive grasp. ' Bysshe, we both have the legs and the skin of an elephant, but neither of us has his sagacity ! ' He shook his head in sad, silent disapproval ; to jest in the very jaws of death was hardened insensibility, not genuine philosophy. He opened in like manner the bosoms and viewed the skin of his other associates, and even of strangers. Nor did females escape his curious scrutiny, nor were they particularly solicitous to avoid it ; so impressive were the solemnity and gravity, and the profound melancholy of his fear-stricken and awe-inspiring aspect, that there could be no doubt of the innocence and purity of his intentions : and if he had proceeded to more private examinations and more delicate investigations, the young ladies would unquestionably have submitted themselves with reverence to his researches, which, however, were arrested by authority in the case of the fair dancers before they had greatly exceeded the bounds of decorum.

This strange fancy continued to afflict him for several weeks, and to divert, or distress, his friends, and then it was forgotten as suddenly as it had been taken up, and gave place to more cheerful reminiscences, or forebodings : he was able to listen to, or even occasionally, but rarely, to relate himself droll stories. One of them, as it is perfectly innocent, may be repeated without envy or calumny : it had occurred two or three years before.

He called one morning on an acquaintance in London, and saluted the door, as he was wont to do with a thundering rap, and followed it up with a corresponding application to the bell. His invocation, although sufficiently audible, was not answered. The injunction, ' rap and ring ', was never thrown away upon him ; he made his coming heard. The summons was repeated with increased energy, and he was just about to try the effect of a third attack, for he was naturally and habitually impatient, when the door was partially opened, and the good-natured and obliging Mr. Graham addressed him with extreme

trepidation over the chain, solemnly assuring him that he was the master of the house, and the only man who resided in it. 'Why, what the devil is the matter here, Graham?' The exclamation and a burst of shrill, shrieking laughter led to an explanation, and the tone of Mr. Graham's nerves was so much restored, that he was able to unhook the chain and admit him.

Having carefully barricaded the door, he conducted Bysshe upstairs into the front bedroom. He stooped down, and held a whispered conversation for some time with a person under the bed, and after a long parley and often-repeated assurances, crawled forth into the light, covered with flue and feathers, the Platonic lover, for such he was. He was greatly agitated at first, but having composed himself by degrees, he proceeded to relate the strange story of his amour.

In his accustomed solitary walks about the streets of London he had fallen in with a lady, still reasonably young and passably good-looking, who seemed to be desirous of making his acquaintance. He entered into conversation with her, and they formed a philosophical friendship on the instant, and on the spot. They used to meet and walk together, and converse; to converse after their own peculiar fashion; for the lady, being excessively loquacious, said everything, and the gentleman, on the contrary, being remarkably taciturn, said nothing. They also corresponded; her voluminous epistles arrived daily, and were answered by his letters of a moderate length. A shower overtook the happy pair one morning in their walk, a coach was called to convey the lady to her home, or rather to set her down prudently near it. They took their seats, and toddled on together, the fair one discoursing, with her accustomed volubility, of the nature of love in the abstract, and her mute adorer listening with due and delighted attention. But presently the lady became vehemently disturbed; she pointed out with extreme and overwhelming emotion a suspicious hackney coach, which she declared was following them; it contained her jealous husband; he would overtake and exterminate them both. The lover sat as far back as he could, to conceal himself, and not venturing to look out of the window, he took all on trust, on the lady's word. The chase continued; she declared they were undone; to baffle pursuit, they drove about in different directions, for several hours; eventually, the enemy's coach was no longer in sight; it was the moment to escape; they must part; she would drive homewards; and the gallant lover must take to his heels,

and make the best of his way to some place of security, for if her cruel husband caught him, he would inevitably murder him. The frightened lover ran straight home, like a hunted cat; the fair object had terrified him so completely that he fancied he was followed and watched, and that the injured, or rather the offended husband, had seen him enter his door. Hence the protection of Mr. Graham, and all the notable precautions and expedients upon which Shelley had dropped. The state of apprehension was cruel. His father was very particular, a man of exemplary piety, who had a violent antipathy to sighs and amorous glances, and if he should detect any attachment, Platonic or other, he would certainly barbecue him. The son was not pious, but he also was particular; he had a particular dislike to stand a shot, and a particular aversion for gunshot wounds, which had been increased by his observations in walking the hospitals. It was horrible to think that a causelessly jealous, narrow-minded monster might come at any moment, pull him out from under his bed by the leg, and shoot him dead in his own bedroom! Bysshe loved a bit of romance, a perilous adventure, a hair-breadth escape: he stood and listened to the tale, quivering with delight.

'But you have got her letters! Where are they? Where are they? Show them to me; let me see them. You may trust me!'

A pile of letters was produced—of letters crossed and re-crossed, and crossed again. Bysshe caught up one, and began to read it eagerly; after hurrying over a few pages, he threw it down, and cried out:

'She is mad! She is mad! The woman is mad, raving mad!'

Upon a calm, deliberate examination of the correspondence, it was manifest, even to the lover himself, that such was really the case. He had got hold of a mad woman, or rather she had got hold of him. She was possibly out on furlough, and a fresh access having appeared, the pursuit, if she had actually been pursued, was not by an unkind husband, with destructive swords and pistols, but by a kind keeper with a well-aired, conservative strait waistcoat. The existence of a husband probably was but a hallucination of the mind; and the loved one was some poor, insane spinster. Not deeming it expedient to look out of the window, he admitted that he had never seen the pursuing coach.

I asked Bysshe what the attractive lunatic's letters were about. The passages which I read treated exclusively of Hermes Trismegistus, to whom the lady compared her Platonic and somewhat frigid and apathetic lover. Whether Hermes Trismegistus also concealed himself under his bed, when he had made too free with the wife of Thoth Moses, and had rashly stirred up jealousy in Egypt, she did not state.

With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato.

Nor did she say whether the operation of unsphering was effected by drawing him with terriers, or otherwise, from under the bed, like an earthed fox, or a badger, from his hiding-place. The frame of Shelley's mind, by nature and habit, was serious—melancholy, but that he had no feeling for the comic was not true; he delighted to tell this droll tale to his female friends; to tell it dramatically, acting parts of it, and shrieking with paroxysms of the wildest laughter. He had a like but a longer tale about another acquaintance, who took up with, or took off with a mad woman; a right merry and conceited geste it is, but it belongs to a subsequent period. Yet by an ill-timed jest have I sometimes offended him—for example: He was speaking with somewhat unreasonable displeasure of his father's relish for port wine:

‘Your father reminded me forcibly of Milton's Comus.’

‘How is that possible? It is absurd!’

‘It is possible and true. Comus, who must have been a good judge of wine, said to the lady Alice of the brothers Egerton, much to the credit of themselves and of the hospitality of Ludlow Castle,

Their Port was more than human.

A brother poet could not bear that the quaint majesty of Milton's *Masque* should furnish a handle for a paltry pun; and he was right.

The cousins, with whom we had formerly associated, had quitted London, and were gone to complete their medical education, if I mistake not, at Edinburgh; they were good-natured and obliging, but insipid and insensible, and incapable of comprehending Bysshe's poetical and philosophical flights of fancy. He never mentioned them.

He saw nothing of his own relatives, but agreeable associates

were not wanting, neither were intruders nor obtruders. There was no end of obtrusion ; the word intrusion is not strong enough. One person wanted to teach Harriet Italian ; another, probably, would have given, or sold, to Eliza instructions in Hebrew, or Arabic ; but the greater number, without any excuse or pretence, forced themselves upon him. He was a rock to which limpets stuck fast, and periwinkles attached themselves. *Queen Mab* was now printed, but it was not published, I believe ; it was not publicly exposed for sale, but copies had been privately distributed to friends. The poem had attracted attention. Shelley is the only modern poet whose verses uniformly appear to be inspired ; no other poet of recent times is so completely and universally under the influence of inspiration. The earliest, the most hasty, the least finished, the most unformed and irregular of his poems have, notwithstanding their manifold defects, something superhuman about them. They seem to have been breathed, not by mere mortal, but by some god or demon. His writings are invariably demoniacal, plainly the compositions of a demoniacal man. The least striking and complete of his productions has a preternatural air and tone. Of other poets, his contemporaries, the masterpieces are sometimes good, very good indeed ; it would be unjust to deny it. But the trundling of a wheelbarrow cannot be compared to the pace of a race-horse, to the bounding of an antelope, or to the flight of an eagle, although it may often happen that the barrow is admirably trundled by a robust and active navigator—by the choicest flower of hodmen ; still, there cannot be any comparison between the different modes of progression.

Shelley was uniformly a gentleman, eminently and strikingly such, and his Muse is always a lady. In all their dealings with him, and they were many and various, the nine sacred sisters conducted themselves like nine gentlewomen ; whilst vulgarity was too commonly the characteristic feature of the poetry of coetaneous writers. This odious quality is of course consummate in the productions of the Cockney versifiers ; there was something low-lived about the Lake school. And the chief of the romantic style wrote about barons and knights, it is true ; but it is equally true that Sir Walter Scott spoke of these aristocratical personages, not as if he was one of themselves, but as if he had been their factor, steward, or land-agent.

It has been affirmed that 'it was not until Shelley resided

in Italy that he made Plato his study'. It is quite true that he had not read much of the dialogues of Plato in the original Greek before; but he had long been familiar with his philosophy by means of translations; and he had imbibed, at a very early age, his doctrine and theories at second hand. *Queen Mab* is the production of a Platonist incontestably; and if the great master of the Academy were to read it, he would at once acknowledge the author for a disciple—for a favoured and a favourite one.

A big and burly Quaker, the proprietor of a large soke-mill, with a considerable water-power, whose profits and privileges were trenched upon by steam-mills, once said to me: 'It is perfectly certain that God Almighty never intended that his creatures should grind corn by steam!' A Quaker—a vessel of direct immediate inspiration—may readily attain to perfect certainty in such a matter; but it is not apparent how persons placed in a less commanding position than a member of the Society of Friends can obtain it.

The text of the poem demonstrates that the Divine Poet was not less familiar with the counsels of deities, than our valued friend, the miller. 'What is the use of such poetry? What is the use of any poetry?' has sometimes been asked. We may ask, in our turn, what is use? Of what use is poetry? It is of no use to the farmer, as a farmer; it will not make the grass grow; it will not keep the fly from the turnips, or mildew from the wheat; it will not drain a piece of boggy land, and so kill the rushes.

'I never read *Paradise Lost*', said a celebrated Cambridge mathematician.

'But you must read it; everybody has read Milton's great epic'.

'Well, as it is absolutely necessary, I will read it'.

After a short respite the mathematician said to his friend: 'I have read your famous poem. I read it attentively; but what does it prove? There is more instruction in half a page of Euclid! A man might read Milton's poem a hundred, aye, a thousand times, and he would never learn that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal!'

What does *Queen Mab* prove? If the Cambridge mathematician had read it, he would have found that it proved even less than *Paradise Lost*. The whole poem is eminently, excessively spiritual; replete with imaginary, unearthly creations. It has been ignorantly stigmatized as atheistical.

On the contrary, it is specially theistical, full of divinity obscurely shadowed forth. It is altogether unphilosophical, if indeed the notes are to be accounted philosophical. The text presents throughout a strong and a strange contrast to the commentary. It glows, notwithstanding, with an ardent, a wild love of liberty, more particularly of the absolute, unrestrained liberty of thought and of speech, often extreme, sometimes extravagant, running occasionally even into rhapsody. The tendency of the verse is unfortunately oppressed and weighed down by the prose. By verse everything may be demanded; to verse everything may be conceded; for the heavenly enthusiasm, the divine rapture of the poet, his celestial and preternatural inspiration, afford an undeniable excuse, a licence for all excesses. But prose is accounted of a more practical nature, and it cannot claim the like indulgence of interpretation. It was unwise, injudicious, imprudent, unfortunate, and injurious to have appended notes, so-called philosophical. The notes have little to recommend them—little that is original; they consist chiefly of excerpts from the writings of Paine, Godwin, and others. Whatever was startling in these is rendered more offensive by being set out in detached fragments, without the modifications, qualifications, conditions, and softenings, which are found in the works from whence they were taken; when they are read in their proper and natural position, with all their antecedents and consequents, whatever seems crude and repulsive is much mitigated and corrected. But when harsh paradoxes were brought out strongly in separate, segregated passages, the implied adoption of the sentiments and dogmas of their several authors becomes in its nakedness indecent and shocking; and the violent opinions promulgated in the commentary seem to give a meaning to the poem itself which does not in reality belong to it, and could never have been fairly deduced from it. The common proceeding of modern times, that the poet should be at once, and in his own person, both poet and commentator—that he should compose not only verses, but annotations upon his own verses, is preposterous.

It is hard to comprehend how Juvenal could be not merely Juvenal, but Ruperti likewise; Persius, Bond as well as Persius. The contemporaries of these two great satirical poets did not require coeval illustrations; the powerful verses of the vigorous, unsparing satirists were sufficiently intelligible. It was only through lapse of time, change of circumstances

and social conditions, and the failure of various sources of information, that notes became necessary, in order to make plain what before had been plain enough of itself to every instructed and intelligent reader. The self-annotating poet would compel us to imagine that Virgil was Servius, as well as Virgil ; and that Pindar was the author of the excellent and copious scholia upon his exalted odes, as well as of the odes themselves ; that Homer was Didymus, or even Eustathius, and composed the voluminous commentary on his divine poems, called the Horn of Amalthea, probably which is usually ascribed to the most erudite Archbishop of Salonichi. The *Georgics* and the *Works and Days* would probably have been less acceptable to Roman and Grecian readers, if they had been loaded at their first advent with heavy ballast, like Darwin's ponderous commentary on his *Loves of the Plants*. A poet who cannot write verses that do not need a perpetual comment to render them comprehensible, is certainly not competent to write verses ; he should confine himself to the more congenial and humbler duty of writing notes upon the verses of others. Such a prosaic poet is apt to betray himself, and to forget that he is not writing notes when he should be writing verses. A historian who explains his meaning, not in the text but at the foot of his pages, will probably produce very good notes, but a very indifferent history.

It will be necessary to return to the notes on *Queen Mab*, and to speak hereafter of the purposes to which they were foolishly applied and fraudulently perverted : insomuch so, that his queen proved to be

A fiend, a fairy, pitiless and rough :
A wolf. Nay, worse !

Shelley had every qualification that a poet ought to possess, the highest qualifications in the most luxuriant and lavish abundance ; but few, or none, of those which constitute a patient, painful, careful commentator. He lived and moved and had his being under the absolute, despotical empire of a vivid, fervid fancy, as his illusion respecting elephantiasis demonstrates. The legendary tales and popular traditions, which he had heard as a child, had taken complete possession of his imagination at a very early age, such as the marvels of the Forest of St. Leonard in Sussex ; of St. Leonard, the godson of Clovis ; the recluse, the solitary, the hermit ; the inhabitant of the forests of the Limousin ; the deliverer of

prisoners, and the slayer of huge serpents. It was under the last attribute that he was chiefly venerated. The mountains and waterfalls of Wales and Cumberland, the English and Irish lakes leave their image on the fancy and memory of all who behold them ; that the impression of these striking objects was deeper and more sensible in him, than in an ordinary spectator, is undeniable ; and he gave many and frequent proofs how profoundly the resistless beauties of these miracles of nature had entered into his inmost soul, and had become integral portions of himself and of his existence. But the poetic faculty of turning himself mentally into the subject of his poem, of metamorphosing himself internally into an attendant spirit, into Titania, Queen Mab herself was conspicuous and astonishing. This faculty, I apprehend—for, claiming no fellowship myself with poets, I speak on this topic doubtingly and under correction—is common to all true poets. In trifling matters, moreover, which were unconnected with, and unworthy of, poetic themes, he could become, I should say rather he became, involuntarily and unconsciously, the very personage of whom any remarkable incident was related, however trivial it might be, that forcibly struck his impressible soul. It would be tedious to offer many examples, and improper not to present any : two or three instances may be given ; the more insignificant they are the more plainly will they illustrate his disposition and habit to adopt the situation, the feelings, the colour of other persons.

I told Bysshe one day that I had been lately in society where short-hand had become the subject of conversation. He was not himself a proficient in this art, he would never have had the patience to learn it ; but he would sometimes take up a piece of paper covered with writing in short-hand. and holding it commonly the wrong way upwards, he would gaze upon it a long time in mute amazement. Some short-hand writer was mentioned, I told him, not a professional stenographer, but a man of learning and letters, a person of great talent and not less eccentricity. He wrote short-hand much, and seeking to improve a useful art, he wrote shorter and shorter, and abbreviated daily more and more, and however little he might write, and however much he might abbreviate, he was always able to read his notes with equal, or nearly equal, facility. At last he carried his abbreviation to such an extent that he wrote absolutely nothing. Some said that he still continued to read what he had written, or

rather what he had not written. According to others, he was greatly astonished when he had put down nothing whatever, not a single character, not one mark, on taking up his note-book, after the interval of a few days, to find that he was unable to decipher the blank pages. I have often seen Bysshe sitting with a piece of paper in his hand, his eyes fixed intently on the uninscribed leaf, seriously and earnestly studying it. It was evident that he had been changed inwardly into the surprised and disappointed abbreviator, vainly trying to recall what had never existed. Once whilst he was thus occupied he anxiously inquired—

‘Who invented short-hand?’

‘Tiro, it is believed’.

‘And who was Tiro, pray?’

‘He was Cicero’s clerk’.

‘Was Tiro really the name of Cicero’s clerk?’

‘Yes! And Tiro, Oh! was no bad name for the clerk of so famous an orator! How tired the poor fellow must have been listening all day to his master’s copious eloquence!’

Soon afterwards he was sitting alone in a corner, his countenance expressive of extreme dejection, and the utmost weariness. ‘Oh! Tiro, Oh!’ he suddenly exclaimed, yawning aloud, yawning as heartily as if he had heard out the whole of the orations against Verres. His lively fancy had transmuted him into the swunk freedman, and in the spirit he had been in the Senate, or the Forum, where he had been bored to death by the endless prosing of the great master of Roman eloquence.

‘But Tiro was not a mere clerk, an amanuensis; he was a person of ability, of learning! yes, and of considerable ingenuity, for he was the inventor of short-hand’. ‘That was a great invention, was it not?’ ‘It was, but possibly he sometimes thought that of short speeches would have been a still greater!’ Shelley abhorred a pun. ‘It snaps the thread of discourse, blows out the candle, and puts an end at once to all conversation. It is like a troublesome and odious insect, a wasp. No! It wants the dignity of a wasp, it is a mosquito, a gnat! But you can do anything with me, you can sometimes even reconcile me to a pun!’ Shelley used to pick the turpentine off fir-trees, and eat it with a relish, or in walking through a pine wood he would apply his tongue to a larch, and lick it as it oozed in a liquid state from the bark. I never met with any one else who had the same taste. I have

expostulated with him on the subject, and of course in vain, and I once related to him a little apologue, which was rather more efficacious. I was once at a ball, a very pleasant one it was, and we were all dancing away merrily, but we were obliged to desist, for all on a sudden the fiddlers stopped in the middle of a tune ; we told them to play on, but they answered, we cannot ; ' We cannot go on with our music, because that rascal, Bysshe, has eaten up all our rosin ! ' Sometimes when he was creeping stealthily up to a fir-tree, that he might lick it, my fable of the poet and the fiddler, would come into his head, and he would turn aside laughing. The broken up ball, the interrupted country dance, the enraged musicians, the whole scene appeared in a moment before his eyes. ' And so you were obliged to give up dancing ? Pray what did your partner say ? How did she like it ? Was she not much disappointed ? Was she not very angry with me ? ' It has often happened that I being so much with the Divine Poet, being constantly indeed in his company, whenever my avocations would permit, was taken for him. Not that we were at all like one another, but persons who knew who we were, who knew the two friends, but did not know which was which, frequently addressed me for him, persons of both sexes ; and this occurred during the whole period of our intimacy.

I sometimes heard extraordinary things which I will not repeat, inasmuch as the communications were made in confidence, although it was a mistaken confidence, yet never misplaced. I have many times been accosted in society—in elegant society—as Mr. Shelley ; sometimes I at once rectified the error, but sometimes, through a curiosity, not altogether inexcusable, I hope, I have suffered the delusion to continue for a while.

' You are Mr. Shelley, are you not ? '

' Well, and what then ? '

I am happy to add, that when I explained myself, no confusion, no embarrassment ensued. I was esteemed a faithful Achates ; what had been confided was not meant for my ear, but for that of Eneas ; whether Dido, the queen, or the celestial Venus herself, or her companions, the Graces, or some half goddess, one of her attendant nymphs, spoke to me, as if I were of a heavenly origin, I have answered thus, and perhaps not imprudently : ' I am glad you think so favourably of my friend ; I will tell him what you say '.

' Pray do ; you will not forget ! '

It is probable that Bysshe was now and then in like manner taken for his friend ; but I never was informed by him, that this had actually happened. One misapprehension was of so comical a character that it ought to be related ; and since, most assuredly, the Loves and Graces were not concerned in the matter, there can be no scruples of delicacy in telling the adventure just as it fell out. I called at his lodgings one afternoon in the summer to walk together, as we were wont. He was not at home, but he had left a message for me, that if I went to the residence of a common friend, I should not fail to find him there. I at once repaired thither, and was kindly received, as I invariably was. He had not arrived, but if I would stay to dinner, I should doubtless see him, for he would come, if not to dinner, for certain in the course of the evening. I readily consented to the proposal, and I sat chatting in the drawing-room, hearing the news of the day, and much admiration and many commendations of my incomparable friend, such as I invariably heard wherever he was known. A bell gave warning that dinner would be served in half-an-hour, and I was conducted upstairs into the front bedroom to wash my hands. Whilst I was thus employed two ill-looking fellows burst abruptly into the room ; one of them locked the door and set his back against it, telling me that he arrested me ; that I was his prisoner. He was a short, stout man. The other, a long, lean fellow, showed me a writ, and presented me with a copy of it.

‘ What does all this mean ? ’ I asked.

‘ You know very well, you are Mr. Percy Bysshe Shelley ! ’

‘ You are pleased to say that I am ’.

‘ We know very well that you are the defendant ; you need not try to persuade us that you are not ! ’

‘ Then I will not try ! ’

Upon this the bailiffs became rather insolent, and were inclined to be abusive. I finished washing myself and then sat down by the window ; the men stood in the middle of the room growling and grumbling. In ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, there was a gentle tap at the door ; the man who had locked it opened it—a spare, white-faced fellow dressed in black, like an undertaker’s man, entered. He looked at me with surprise, staring hard, and whispered something to the bailiffs, who seemed still more astonished than he was. They then threw open the door and told me I was at liberty, and might depart ; it was a mistake. John Doe and Richard

Roe, and their friend in mourning, began to offer excuses, explanations, and apologies, assuring me that they always acted on the best information, and seldom made mistakes. I did not answer, but walked down to dinner in silence. How long they remained in the bed-room, whether they were converted by the influences of the locality to a vegetable diet, and induced to return to nature, or what became of these worthies I know not, for I never fell in with any of the party again.

The arrest, as I afterwards learnt, was for the price of the good Harriet's fine, new carriage. After such an indignity, and in order to wipe off the stigma, I ought to have had a ride, and a good long one, too, in the carriage; but I had not that satisfaction; I never even saw the vehicle, nor heard of it, indeed, except on this occasion. Whenever any act of signal folly, extraordinary indiscretion and insane extravagance was to be perpetrated, I was never informed of it, and certainly there was no obligation to tell me. And without doubt it was better that it should be so, in order that the foster-child of the Muses might fulfil his high destinies; if he could have followed the humble suggestions of ordinary prudence—if he could have been guided by common place advice and common sense, the tenor of his innocent, guileless life would have been more tranquil, but prosaic, the poetical elements being starved and stunted.

It is a well founded and just maxim, that things are best known from their opposites. It is also true, that many things which are most dissimilar, have yet some strong and striking point of resemblance: it is true, moreover, of persons.

I have frequently instituted in my own mind a comparison between two people, with whom I was well acquainted, and who appear to have been the most unlike of mankind. Each of the parties would have been shocked and deeply offended at being likened to the other; each would have felt an antipathy for the other, and an invincible repugnance to be brought into contact, or collision. The ardent and zealous admirers of both, being equally bigoted in their respective views, would have been displeased and alarmed at the imputation of the slightest and most distant resemblance; and yet there was in many respects the strongest similarity.

It would have been practicable, and perhaps profitable, to have written the lives of both these distinguished individuals, and to have drawn, after the manner of Plutarch, an ethical parallel between them; a parallel, or comparison of the lives

of my incomparable friend, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and of my justly celebrated relative, poor Granville Sharp.

Amongst my earliest and firmest recollections are the numerous and wonderful particulars which I continually heard of my 'Cousins Sharp', and the many peculiarities which I witnessed myself in such of the members of that very remarkable family whom I had seen and known. 'Your cousin Sharp'. The affectionate appellation, 'Cousin', was still in frequent use in the North of England, when I was a boy; and it was adopted sometimes when its application was not strictly correct. We could certainly claim no consanguinity with the blood of the Sharps: they were the grandchildren of Dr. John Sharp, Archbishop of York, who was the son of a wool-stapler in the West Riding of Yorkshire; but I believe some affinity, some connection by marriage, subsisted; but I do not at present remember what it was, and it is immaterial. Poor Granville was long and well known for many ingenious and original, but whimsical speculations, of a description totally alien and averse from the poetical and philosophical fancies of Shelley. He rendered himself illustrious by his crusade against and victory over the Slave Trade and Slavery, and he won thereby a monument among the renowned dead in Westminster Abbey. Poor Granville abolished slavery; others, more worldly wise and practical men, who sought and found their own advantage in it, carried out the details; and finally, as is uniformly the case in all great changes, a rabble rout of impostors and mountebanks shouted in triumph at the ultimate consummation of his success. But the meek, single-hearted, innocent old man, of infinite singularity and credulity, and entire simplicity, did the deed. To relate his successful progress from the famous case of Somerset, the Negro, to his last act in that career, would be a long story and quite foreign to my present purpose. At the time when I first came to London, the venerable apostle of Negro Emancipation resided in chambers in the Temple, a solitary bachelor; indeed, he in a manner died there. I had the happiness to see occasionally, as a young man, one whom I had known as a school-boy; and I have passed fresh from Granville to Shelley, and from Shelley to Granville. How different, and yet how like! The thought soon struck me forcibly, and it grew in strength. Both were equally impressive and unimpressible; both alike inaccessible to reason, with more than a tinge of fanaticism, alike bigoted to opposite and

discordant fancies ; of ascetic lives, more than Spartan frugality, temperance, and austerity ; harsh to themselves alone, to others charitable, generous, profuse, lavish. Of childish credulity, ready to believe, because it was impossible ; full of rash reliance, and a blind credence in the professions of the unworthy. But the most remarkable point of resemblance was this, that both these celebrated men, always desiring to do nothing but good, did in fact nothing but mischief. My poor cousin Granville, the hoary-headed apostle of benevolence, ruined, utterly ruined and destroyed, the finest, richest, and happiest of the dependencies of the Crown of Great Britain. It is true, that the youthful, philosophical philanthropist never took any serious, resolute, permanent part in public affairs, and therefore never had an opportunity to do mischief by wholesale and on a grand scale. But his hasty, inconsiderate bounty in private life, by encouraging laziness, promoting dependence, and teaching the objects of his indiscriminate generosity to indulge unreasonable expectations, was the fertile source of much evil ; and by his lavish charity he hampered, impoverished and punished himself, and suffered needless and unmerited poverty and privations. Not only poor Granville, but the whole family of Sharp were equally culpable in this respect. I have heard painfully laughable examples of their beneficent indiscretions, demonstrating, that, in an artificial state of society, a little knowledge of human nature and of the world is indispensable to prevent the open-handed and open-hearted giver inflicting injuries by his gifts ; something of the subtlety of the serpent must be combined with the simplicity of the dove in the distribution of eleemosynary funds. In early life I heard histories of the Christian achievements, many of them very ludicrous, of this excellent family, more particularly in connection with the much vaunted charities at Bamburgh. If it should ever be deemed expedient by authority, as the public voice loudly declares that it is, to institute a searching inquiry into the disposal of the munificent bequests of Lord Crewe, and to learn from his trustees in what manner their ample funds and extensive patronage have been expended and exercised ; the real nature, actual working, and ultimate consequences of the proceedings of the amiable house of Sharp will be laid open ; and whether their dealings with this large mass of property form an exception to the ordinary results of their indiscreet benevolence, will fully appear.

An open, public inquiry, is required, if any real good is to be effected ; the futile and childish investigations of charity commissioners with closed doors, have proved at best useless. The Charity Commission, it has been said, commenced in folly, and being laid hold of by the strong hand of an able and unscrupulous man, terminated in knavery.

If there were points of contact, of strong and striking similarity, between these two illustrious individuals, as most assuredly there were, there were also points of repulsion, of utter and total dissimilarity. No temperament was ever less poetical than that of Granville Sharp. His own peculiar course had been clearly marked out for him, and he accomplished it nobly. It was fanciful and fantastical enough, in truth, but not imaginative. Urania had imparted to him largely a knowledge of heavenly things ; but neither she nor her sacred sisters had touched his pure and holy lips with a live coal kindled on the altar of Apollo.

It was wisely ordained that Shelley also should fulfil his destinies—his high destinies, which carried him away impetuously in a different and opposite direction. It was certainly ordained that he should become a divine poet. The poetic faculty is surely divine. A poet is a maker—a creator ; and creation is the highest power and energy of divinity. To the Poet is granted a portion of the loftiest and most wonderful attributes of the Supreme Creator : he is constituted and appointed a creator ; and this, poor Granville never was.

It was my fortune to be once, and only once, in the company of a personage who has shone forth conspicuously in Bysshe's correspondence, under two very different phases ; she had been for some time an inmate of his solitary mansions in Wales. At her first coming to dwell with him in the desert, she was warmly recommended to correspondents, and more particularly to William Godwin, and hailed with a kind of angelic salutation, as blessed amongst women ; as a tower-proof, fire-proof, bomb-proof blue ; free from and above all prejudices ; and a resolute champion of the Rights of Women. The author of *St. Leon* seems to have received the recommendation of the author of *St. Irvyn* rather coldly. A grocer never likes figs ; and possibly he had already heard quite enough about the ' Rights of Women ' : he did not take the bait. At a period not long subsequent, she is stigmatized as dirty, androgynous, and, indeed, a brown demon.

I called, one Sunday morning, I think at some hotel, to

walk and dine. It was soon after their return from Wales ; and in due order it ought to have been noticed before ; but the chronology of such an interview need not be exact. The heroine was tall and thin, bony and masculine, of a dark complexion ; and the symbol of male wisdom, a beard, was not entirely wanting. She was neither young nor old ; not handsome—not absolutely ill-looking. She had been a governess and a schoolmistress, as was sufficiently indicated by a prim, formal, didactic manner and speech. At first she possessed some influence over the young couple ; but the charming Eliza would not tolerate any influence but her own. She had worked upon Harriet's feelings, and the good Harriet had succeeded in making his former favourite odious to Bysshe. It had been finally arranged that she was to depart—to go away that very evening—which was boasted of as a great blessing ; and such, perhaps, it might have been, if there had been any valid and available security, that another and a greater bore would not soon succeed to the vacancy.

Bysshe could not walk with me ; he was particularly engaged, as often happened, to go somewhere, and to perform some indispensable and important thing.

I can fly, or I can run,
Quickly to the green earth's end,
Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend ;
And from thence can soar as soon
To the corners of the moon.

Harriet had a bad headache ; so I was summarily condemned to walk with the two spinsters.

Accordingly, in execution of my sentence, I was turned over to them ; and with the brown demon on my right arm and the black diamond on my left, we went forth into St. James's Park, and walked there, and in the neighbouring parks, for a long time, a very long time. 'These were my jewels', as Cornelia proudly exclaimed.

In the beginning, the fair rivals, the dark rivals, quarrelled with one another across me, to whom, however, they were both exceedingly civil—deferential, I may say. The lovely Eliza attacked the foe with haughty contempt ; the bearded preceptress defended herself and offended her enemy with meek contumacy. I never saw Eliza so much alive before or since. I never knew her come out so decidedly. For some time, there was hit for hit delivered on both sides with calm, soft acrimony, but by degrees the jangling abated, and the

angel on my left collapsed ; she relapsed into her normal condition of languor, of languor at the last gasp. I then turned to the angel on my right, and interrogated her about the Rights of Women, respectfully requesting to be informed what they were. She received my request graciously, and immediately complied with it. The accents of wisdom began to flow in a gentle, continuous stream from her bearded lips. I must confess I could not comprehend what these rights were ; or, to speak more correctly, I could not discover what were the obstacles that prevented females, who valued the peculiar whims and fancies termed by her their rights, from indulging them. I represented my view of the matter to the scholastic Minerva, and she could not deny that all women, emancipated from the control of parents and guardians, might act as they pleased in such matters.

The conversation, which went on agreeably enough with Wisdom on my right side, was extremely distasteful to Beauty on my left. Eliza knew nothing of the Rights of Women, or of anything else. She was therefore condemned to a long and ignominious silence, whilst the grand principles by which feminine felicity is to be ensured were powerfully and elaborately expounded.

‘How could you talk to that nasty creature so much ? How could you permit her to prate so long to you ?’ said the lovely Eliza, peevishly, when she took her arm out of mine at the door, on returning home to dinner. ‘Why did you encourage her ? Harriet will be seriously displeased with you, I assure you ; she will be very angry !’

The indignation of the good Harriet, if it really was excited, must have been too big for utterance : I never heard of it. She merely asked, ‘Were you not tired of the Brown Demon ?’ Most infernally ! might have been an appropriate answer ; and to say the truth, which I did not dare to say, I was equally weary of Angel and Devil.

Dinner came off tranquilly, and the evening passed away pleasantly enough, for it was fully understood on all sides that she was to take her departure that night, which arrangement apparently was doubtful in the morning. There being little conversation during tea, I ventured to inquire again about the Rights of Women. The Goddess of Reason began incontinently to lecture with fluency and animation. Presently Bysshe quitted his chair, and came and stood before her, listening with attention, and looking enthusiastic, as if his

former interest had in some measure revived. The sisters eyed him with manifest displeasure, as a person holding treasonable communications with a public enemy.

CHAPTER XXIV

At the appointed hour a coach was called, and the Defender of the Faith and of her sex took her leave of us freely, quietly, and civilly ; and being fairly gone with all her boxes and band-boxes never to return—and she never did return—the whole party believed that they were very happy, having had a good deliverance, having been freed from a load that had become of late intolerable. For my own part, not having felt the burthen, I could not participate in their joy. She appeared to me a fair average specimen of a schoolmistress, and well adapted in every respect for the employment, which she had long exercised, and might doubtless long continue to exercise with advantage. Certainly there was nothing about her to justify either the raptures at meeting her, or the excessive delight at parting. I could only marvel, as I have constantly marvelled, at the thick-coming fancies of my imaginative friend.

I never saw the Brown Demon again ; I never heard more of her. Save that the lovely yet spiteful Eliza, who could not soon forgive, once whispered, ' If you only knew how filthily dirty she is, you would not come near her ! ' This censure might mean no more, than that the unprejudiced, intellectual being does not brush her hair nearly long enough ; does not spend more, would you believe it, than eight hours a day ' in sleeking her soft alluring locks ! '

The correspondence shows, that instruction in the Rights of Women was not obtained without a valuable consideration ; but the amount does not appear. The regular system of organized plunder, of this hereafter, to which he was afterwards subject until the end of his life, and, indeed, even longer, had not yet commenced. Two or three of his more enlightened friends, it is true, advocates of the community of goods, simple creatures, utterly ignorant of the value of money, and sceptics as to the rights of property, had contrived already, now and then, to extract moderate sums out of his ill-furnished purse ; and no doubt his Irish allies borrowed of him.

The wrongs of an oppressed, injured, and insulted country could never be redressed by her patriotic and disinterested sons without a little private peculation, without levying toll. It was difficult, impossible, indeed, to obtain a correct estimate of the spoil, the spoilers were not communicative ; there were a certain secrecy and a mystery about Bysshe, which were impenetrable.

It is a popular superstition in some countries, that the goat passes one hour of the twenty-four every day in the infernal regions. However attentively that wild and active creature may be watched, it always disappears, it is said, during that period, and it is impossible to find it in its hour of absence, however diligent the search may be ; wherever the goat may be, it always knows the shortest way to the Shades below ; and if it be tied up, or otherwise confined, it is confidently asserted, and this at least is not improbable, that the animal grows exceedingly uneasy and restless.

I was often reminded of this picturesque and poetical legend by the habits of Shelley. He used to vanish in as abrupt and inexplicable a manner as a goat ; to remove himself as effectually beyond the reach of pursuit, whenever he was at liberty ; and restraint was not less irksome to him than to the free denizen of the mountains. Those who were acquainted with him could entertain no suspicion that his visit was ever paid to the infernal deities ; his course assuredly was not downwards. The young poet was, peradventure, admitted for a season to celestial converse ; his nature being rather demoniacal than human, he became the associate of higher intelligences ; like the shepherd of Ascra, the Muses themselves were personally present with him. He returned to mortal intercourse awe-stricken, having refreshed his fancy by the sight of glorious things, which he never revealed to others, not even to his most intimate friends.

I have sometimes seen him standing a long while watching a goat patiently, and following after it, for I had related the superstitious legend to him, and it captivated his fancy and pleased him prodigiously ; and he would eye a goat, that came unexpectedly towards him, eagerly, and inquire with penetrating asking glances ; ' What news from Hades ? '

The goat is a Dionysiacal quadruped ; habitually given to scale Parnassus, to spring boldly from crag to crag on Helicon, to climb with ease to the highest summits of all the mountains of the poets ; a sharer in Bacchic, Orphic, Eleusinian, and

other mysteries ; it is consentaneous with poetic reason and usages for poets, as well as for the mighty Pan and his satyrs, to trace affinities and similarities with the goat.

Shelley's delight was to read Homer, and it grew and strengthened with his years. He had a copy of the Grenville Homer, bound in russia, in two volumes, the *Iliad* in one, and the *Odyssey* in the other ; one of these volumes was continually in his hand. It would be a curious problem to calculate how many times he read the whole through. He devoured in silence, with greedy eyes, the goodly and legible characters often by firelight, seated on the rug, on a cushion, or a footstool, straining his sight, and striking a flame from the coals with the shovel, or whichever of the fire-irons he could first seize upon, remaining in front of the fire until the cheek next to it assumed the appearance of a roasted apple. And he would read some sublime passage aloud, if there was any one at hand to listen, with extreme rapidity, animation and energy, raising his shrill voice, until it equalled the crowing of a cock ; nor would he cease before he reached the end of the book, and then closing it, he laid it gently upon the ground, and lifting up his eyes to the ceiling, he exclaimed with heartfelt pleasure, 'Hah !' remaining for some minutes in an attitude of veneration, wholly absorbed in pleasure and admiration.

It is for such readers that great poets write !—In the same unceremonious posture and position he would pore over pages of some moralist, or metaphysician, whether he were an idealist, or a materialist. The close attention which he bestowed upon the advocates of materialism was exemplary. It is so easy, and so agreeable to believe, without examination, or inquiry, whatever we hear, and more especially what we read in books, whatever in short we see in print, that we can never be sufficiently grateful to those meritorious persons, who will kindly take the trouble to doubt of, or dispute, anything : the claims of scepticism upon our gratitude are not duly recognized. The world is deeply indebted also to epicureans and materialists ; it is a great benefit to mankind, that in every generation a small body of innocent, estimable, and apathetical men should be found ready to demonstrate practically, that their narrow sect cannot possibly flourish ; that we cannot live upon this world alone.

Plato and Aristotle have fed thousands, but to whom did Epicurus ever give a morsel of bread ?—It is a mark of an

ignorant, an ill-bred fellow, to argue pertinaciously about facts, and to contradict every assertion respecting ordinary occurrences ; so it is, on the other hand, the test of a scholar and a man of true genius to bring opinions fairly into review, and especially to cause those principles, which are held commonly to be the most firmly settled, to be discussed anew, by insinuating doubts, or suggesting something, that seems to be inconsistent with them ; and gallantly to encourage the ventilation of the elements, and an examination of the foundations of knowledge, by offering to sustain the weaker side. To encourage those who would practise the art of taking aim, if we may allude to a favourite pastime, by throwing up his hat, that they may take a shot at it ; when a person is so courteous, it is surely most unkind, as some churls are wont to do, to discharge a pistol in his face !

During his protracted residence in London, and the vicinity of London, in the years 1813 and 1814, an auspicious, beneficial, and happy period, we had the good fortune to form a most agreeable intimacy with certain amiable and elegant friends and associates, whose favourite studies were the Italian language and literature ; some of whom even had formerly resided in Italy—a privilege which had been less generally enjoyed then, than now ; and that advantage being more rare, they had profited more by it. It was confined in those days almost exclusively to persons of a certain station, of a liberal education, of ample leisure, competent fortune and cultivated minds ; their position in society had been an introduction to the first people in the countries which they had visited, and these were of a far higher order than are at present to be met with in a land, that has since been severely scourged by cruel and noxious revolutions and violent political commotions fraught with ruin to individuals, and manifold and desolating troubles. By their salutary example, by gentle persuasions, and a soft and benign influence, they called the attention of my friend and myself to a participation in their darling pursuits ; and they powerfully promoted by their precious advice, assistance, and instructions, the invitation which we at once readily accepted, and our thoughts and our reading soon took the direction pointed out to us by our tasteful guides. I procured a sufficient apparatus of approved grammars and dictionaries, and bestowed much of my leisure upon them ; Bysshe, a King in intellect, had always at his command a short and royal road to knowledge. It seemed to a super-

ficial observer, that he rejected and despised the grammar and the dictionary, and all the ordinary aids of a student ; this to a certain extent was the case, but to a certain extent only ; he was impatient of such tardy methods of progression ; nevertheless he sometimes availed himself of them, and when he condescended to be taught, like a mere mortal, which assuredly he was not, his eagle glance, his comprehensive grasp, his inconceivable quickness, and miraculous powers and faculty of apprehension, enabled him to seize and to master in minutes what his less highly gifted fellow-learners acquired in hours, or days, or weeks.

With much pleasure and profit, and not without a certain edification, we read together the fine poem of Tasso ; and we kept together, side by side, in this our first exploit and invasion of the lovely language of a lovely land. There was nothing in the slow progress of the long siege of the holy city, or in the quiet episodes, by which the principal narrative is varied, to stimulate his intense and insatiable curiosity, or provoke his constitutional impatience. At the termination of our joint perusal, the slip of paper was carefully placed in the handsome volume to mark our progress, and whenever we resumed our united study, I saw that it had been honourably suffered to remain at the page where we had left off ; there had been no forestalling, no stealing a march. We thus proceeded steadily together, by an equable progression we advanced, and by regular approaches we took the sacred city, and finished the poem, our first task.

With mingled feelings of pleasure and regret we both quitted the graceful, tender, pious epic, being in our hearts more than half Crusaders, and not altogether indisposed to enlist under the consecrated banners of Godfrey.

When we came to our second author, it was different—our course of conjoint study no longer ran smooth ; it was deranged ; the partnership was broken up. The same slow rate of travelling would no longer satisfy my impatient colleague ; Ariosto had excited, fascinated him. Bysshe soon discovered that the realms of romance and the intercourse of Paladins were his own proper, peculiar element : we could no longer keep together in our chivalry. When I had a spare hour for octave rhymes, and took down the book for our lesson, I found that my adventurous comrade had gone ahead a canto or two ; or, perhaps, that the mark had been transferred to another volume. In reading for the first time a composition

of such overpowering, overwhelming interest—exciting, stimulating, provoking—it was absolutely impossible to wait for me, or for any one ; for Roland furiously mad through love, or even for the fair Angelica herself, much more to expect the uncertain and scant leisure of a law student. The Divine Poet eagerly devoured the marvellous production of a brother poet, returning to it incessantly, and reading it through repeatedly, again and again. He spoke of the unparalleled poem with wild rapture during our walks, and read aloud to me detached passages with energy and enthusiastic delight ; but he could not control his feelings enough for us to go through the ‘*Orlando Furioso*’ hand in hand, as we had marched to the conquest and liberation of Jerusalem : he soon left me to find my way, as I best might, out of the enchanted forest. The easy, flowing style of Ariosto presents fewer difficulties than the elaborate stanzas of Tasso, and was propitious to his speedy way. I proceeded alone steadily and methodically, grammar and dictionary at hand, and by the doubtful light of Hoole’s translation, whenever my other occupations permitted, to traverse forty-six cantos, comprised in six volumes, a long transit, it is true, but the charmed reader wishes it was much longer.

In extenuation of my comparative indifference and insensibility to the enchantments of the divine Ariosto, and in justice to myself, I must be permitted to add, that I was already acquainted, familiar indeed, with the story and incidents, having read the entire poem more than once, as it is rendered by the aforesaid John Hoole ; read it with pleasure in a handsome 8vo edition, adorned with engravings, and well bound, a prize book won by a school-fellow at some former school ; six goodly volumes pleasant to the memory even now, and still distinctly seen through a long vista of just fifty years.

To Bysshe it was a novelty, altogether new in matter and manner, in substance and in language ; to me the language alone was unknown ; he was unacquainted with the whole subject, and entirely ignorant of the tale of magic and marvels ; it came upon him with all the force of a first impression, and the flood of unheard-of wonders bore him away in an irresistible torrent. We did not undertake to seek for a meaning in the abstruse and gloomy sublimity of Dante, until a subsequent period ; of this in its proper place and in due course.

With respect to the other one of the four great Italian poets,

of whom the numerous short poems can hardly be read through consecutively, we were sweetly and forcibly drawn towards him by a peculiar attraction, and were tied fast to his verses, spell-bound by a potent charm.

A most engaging lady of our circle had surrendered herself a fair prey to a kind of sweet melancholy, arising, as far as I could discover, from causes purely imaginary ; a pensive, languid sadness, which gave a character, a grace, an interest to her society and conversation, but did not interfere in any way with the enjoyment of life, and the fullest exercise of the mental and animal functions. She required consolation, she said ; she sought it, and found it at last in the poetry of Petrarch ; and therefore she invariably began the day by reading attentively and repeatedly, as soon as she awoke in the morning, often learning it by heart—a sonnet, or canzone—going thus regularly through the book ; meditating upon it ; revolving it in her mind, and, as it were, feeding upon it in her soul. For a considerable period we saw her almost every day, at some time of the day ; and soon after meeting it was quite in course to inquire, what was the sonnet of the day, and the desponding fair one immediately repeated it with becoming emotion ; or producing her pocket Petrarch, which she always carried about with her, and which by express testamentary direction was to be buried with her, she read it aloud with feeling ; but if it was too touching to be thus given forth, she handed the minute volume to the inquirer, pointing out the proper poetic lesson in Love's scripture appointed for the day. She eloquently and not unskilfully expounded the text, which is frequently obscure and needs exposition, neatly clearing up the difficulties and displaying feelingly the beauties of sentiment and expression. She warmly recommended us, and all with whom she conversed, and who were likely to profit by good advice, to begin every day, as she herself did, by a snatch of tenderness. It would cast a pretty and a pleasing shade of sadness over the whole day ; upon its business and its pleasures, mellowing and mitigating its joys, and softening and relieving its sorrows. Like all zealous persons, she sometimes seemed disposed to recommend that, by legislative enactment, all loyal subjects should be enjoined and required to begin in this manner every day of their lives.

Shelley assured her authoritatively, that when there was a perfect republic, the day would uniformly be opened in this fashion, and the assurance contented her.

Besides laying open to us the poem of the day ; unfolding its true signification, and bringing it down to the level of our comprehension, in which kind offices she never failed ; some other choice passage was selected from the pocket volume, or from a larger and more legible edition, and it received, in like manner, a full explanation. Thus were we initiated gradually and efficiently, and in a most agreeable manner, in the mysteries of the amatory verses of the great poet of love. Petrarch, in a word, was her hero, the best and greatest of men, as Laura de Sades was the happiest of women ; thrice and four times blessed to have been so beloved, besighed, and besonnetted by the prince of poets and of lovers. Bysshe entered at once fully into her views, and caught the soft infection, breathing the tenderest and sweetest melancholy, as every true poet ought. For my own part I was sensible of the value of her teaching, and was grateful for it ; I felt and acknowledged the exquisite beauty, the admirable qualities of the great poet ; and yet, with the levity of youth, I found pleasure in teasing her about her favourite. When she spoke with enthusiasm of Petrarch and his amours, I ventured to hint, that possibly his connexion with Laura was not so pure as she supposed. But this position was untenable ; moreover it was ungenerous to suggest, even in jest, the possibility of frailty in the spotless Laura. I contented myself therefore with advancing, that his passion was very tender and pretty, but it was unreal, a mere poetical figment, moonshine. He was in fact a great, fat prebendary of Padua, who after a hearty breakfast attended to the secular business of the day, particularly to ordering dinner, and went to his cathedral and sang in the choir. He came home, and made as good a dinner as was consistent with his intention of making a still better supper. He took a nap in his easy chair, woke up, and neighing after his neighbour's wife, wrote of his love, his anguish and despair, until the sun went down. He then took a walk in the cool of the evening ; came home and made a tremendous supper, going within a hair's breadth of indigestion, and desiring to defy the gout. Having eaten and drunken well, the amorous ecclesiastic took sweet counsel together with a plump, tidy, young housekeeper, who was Ilia and Egeria to him ; all that Laura herself could have been to the thundering canon, and more. Such was his Platonic passion !

The lady laughed at the profane sally, but admitted, that,

with much gross exaggeration, there might be some little truth in the picture.

'Yet, can you conceive the author of that exquisite sonnet', and she repeated it in a most touching manner—'can you conceive him ordering dinner?'

'Yes, I can, and a very good one too!'

'Can you imagine the person who composed that canzone', and she read a part of it, 'doing what you said he did?'

'What? do you mean kissing his housekeeper?'

'Yes!'

'Yes, I can, and very affectionately, too!'

Bysshe looked not a little shocked and hurt at first by what he considered an indecent irrision of the sacred character of the lover-poet; but he felt and owned at last, that it was not unreasonable or unnatural, in the course of a platonic attachment of forty years, that he should require a little of such consolation. Petrarch says himself that he loved Laura for forty years; he loved her for twenty years living, and for twenty years dead. And he thought the countenance of the tuneful canon, as represented in the numerous engravings of him after the portrait of the celebrated Giotto, was sensual; he disliked the expression, and often found fault with it, insisting either that it could not be a faithful likeness, or that the subject of the picture was not what he is generally believed to have been. But jokes apart, Petrarch is in truth a divine poet. As he loved and admired his Laura for full forty years, so have I humbly loved and admired him for the like, for a still longer period. I am still young enough, thank God! to be delighted by his immortal verses; and when I read them, it is impossible not to think with esteem and gratitude of the charming friend, through whose kindness I was first introduced to him. The relative merits, however, of poets are measured by different standards of comparison. 'Would you suppose, that much of Mr. Wordsworth's poetry was written in the dark; in total darkness? You will hardly credit it, but it is true, perfectly true!' A fussy, foolish little fellow, a banker in a country town, once said to me, 'Many of the finest passages in his best poems, were written in the dark, when it was as dark as pitch; it is truly astonishing! You do not believe it; I cannot ask you to believe it; but it is true, he told me so himself!'

He explained by informing me, that the Lake bard was accustomed to place a pencil and paper by his bedside, and

when a bright thought came to him between the sheets, he wrote it down instantly without striking a light, which was a slow process in an age of tinder-boxes, now obsolete, allowing time for fancies even less volatile than emanations from the lakes to evaporate ; and thus secured it for the benefit of posterity. Through long habit he was able to write correctly and legibly in the dark.

'Can anything be more wonderful ?' asked the little banker, in conclusion.

'Yes ! To write in one's sleep, and to take short-hand notes of one's dreams'.

'Really ! You do not say so ! I do not write short-hand myself, but I know short-hand writers can do most surprising things'.

I related this to Bysshe, who was much amused by it, and more taken by the notion of writing in the dark. He spoke more than once of various contrivances for facilitating it, and several times in emulation, or imitation, of Wordsworth carried pencil and paper to bed with him. But he succeeded very ill in his writing ; he usually lost his pencil, or his paper, or both ; and when he contrived to keep them, the writing was illegible. In these days it would be superfluous to learn to write in the dark ; a light is now procured instantaneously by a lucifer match, and before its contents could leak out of the least retentive memory. As Shelley could not write verses in the dark, he never produced any such poetry as is found in Wordsworth's *Night Thoughts*. Wordsworth's chilly fancy being warmed by three Witney blankets and a good thick counterpane, he became truly a poet ; his finest thoughts were hatched in bed, having been conceived in utter, palpable darkness. 'Any man, who can write verses in the dark must be a real, genuine poet ; he must have it in him : there is no use in denying it !'

The sagacious little banker added, 'Only think ! just consider ! There are poems in Mr. Wordsworth's works that I am not by any means sure I could have written myself, either in the daylight, or in the evening, with two wax candles before me ; but to have written them in the dark ! There can be no mistake about him ; we know very well what he is !'

We may be permitted to smile at the nightly cogitations of a poet, and at his solicitude to note them down in his bed ; yet if a permanent condition of bodily blindness, as in the

case of our own Milton, and of Homer, and other blind poets and prophets of antiquity, sharpened the mental vision, a temporary blindness, caused by the shades of night, may possibly impart a like acuteness, and night thoughts may really be the most poetical and the most precious. At midnight, and during the early watches of the morning, may be most rife and ripe the light and slight fictions, which poets and other writers of fables spin and weave out of themselves, like spiders.

I have often regretted, that my numerous letters have not been preserved ; they described graphically events, the memory of which it is now considered desirable to recall.—I have lately received a scrap of a letter ; I have forgotten to whom it was addressed ; it was written many years after the period to which it refers, but it paints most correctly a certain sprightly bird, to whom we may surely say with Wordsworth

For thy song, lark,
Is strong, lark,
Like a mountain river !

CHAPTER XXV

May 29, 1841.

AT the end of March, 1813, Shelley and Harriet came from Killarney in great haste, leaving Miss Westbrook there, with a large library, but without money, that there might be no temptations to discontinue her studies.

They remained a few days at a hotel in Dover Street, and then Harriet took lodgings in Half-Moon Street, accounting the situation fashionable ; they stayed there several months, and then went to Pimlico to be near the B.'s, which was esteemed very desirable ; and there, I think, Ianthe was born. In August following Shelley came of age.

There was a little projecting window in Half-Moon Street, in which Shelley might be seen from the street all day long, book in hand, with lively gestures and bright eyes ; so that Mrs. N. said, he wanted only a pan of clear water and a fresh turf to look like some young lady's lark, hanging outside for air and song.

There were vivacious ladies even in those very remote

periods, and so it happens that the human race has been continued to our days.

T. J. H.

COOKE'S HOTEL, *Wednesday morn (June, 1813).*

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

Harriet writes in this. I only desire that I were always as anxious to confer on you all possible happiness, as she is. She tells you, that she invites you this evening. It will be better than our lonesome and melancholy interviews.

Your very affectionate,

P. B. SHELLEY.

I am very sure that Harriet will be as kind as ever. I could see, when I spoke to her (if my eyes were not blinded by love), that it was an error, not of the feelings, but of reason. I entreat you to come this evening. I send this by the servant, that there may be no delay.

To T. J. H.

COOKE'S HOTEL, *Friday (July, 1813).*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Medwin, the attorney of Horsham, stayed so late on the night of my promised visit, that I could not come. Last night your short note arrived, also beyond its hour, and the N.'s had already taken me with them. This night the N.'s have a party to Vauxhall; if you will call here at *nine* o'clock we will go together.

What can your notes mean; how suspicious you have become. I will not insert *one but*. Leonora has arrived. Medwin dines with me. Harriet is quite well, and her infant better.

Your affectionate friend,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H.

Vauxhall, as it existed in 1813, was a pleasant resort enough, two or three times in a season, provided always that there was the fullest assurance of a fine evening. It was quite peculiar, unique, the only thing of the kind. For those who loved to witness a stirring scene, there were motion and gaiety, and an ample occasion of being merry by deputy. If quiet was sought, it might be found in a walk under the fine old elms;

there were retired alleys, where it might be strolled peacefully for hours without interruption. The effect of the illumination, of the numerous lamps under the trees, was striking and pleasing ; the countless twinkling little stars fed by humble oil, surprised eyes not yet pampered and spoiled by the superior brilliancy of gas lights. The music was sprightly and inspiring, of a coarse and homely description, but sufficient for the place and purpose, and for the tunes which were played there, and being heard at a distance, was not disagreeable to one predisposed to be amused. It was sweet to witness dancing, which the dancers evidently enjoyed so much, and to see suppers, of which the cockney and country wassailer partook with so conspicuous a relish. Arrack punch was the nectar of these celestial banquets ; a generous liquor. I never drank it at Vauxhall, but at private convivial meetings I have found it a delightful beverage ; in moderation harmless, beneficial indeed ; a drink worthy of heroes, if not of Gods. In these Elysian shades the consumption of arrack must have been prodigious ; waiters were running about all the evening in every direction with smoking bowls ; the fragrant fumes filled the air, cheering the brain and strengthening the chest. I was bidden to assist at such a festival as that palace of pleasure, although of long standing and far-spread renown, never celebrated before or since. It was to be a triumph of female artifice, the most proud, complete, and splendid victory of management and diplomacy that was ever achieved ; the masterpiece, nay, more, the mistresspiece, of consummate guile. Not only Shelley, poet, philosopher, ascetic, hermit, stoic, Spartan, and what not, was to be gulled, to be entrapped and conveyed thither, unconscious of his doom, unsuspecting ; but an innocent young quakeress was also to be beguiled. She was to be lured into a carriage under false pretences, driven in the shades of evening with fraud and covin over Westminster Bridge, she knew not whither, and surreptitiously introduced into the gardens of Comus and Circe, into Vanity Fair, the abodes of sin and shame. Our paschal lamb, our sacrifice without spot, was neither to know whither she was going, nor where she was, nor where she had been.

We conspirators were straitly charged and commanded not to tell her ; to give in answer an unvarying ' I do not know ' to her inquiries as to what it was, what it all meant. We promised obedience. Shelley saw the snare ; how he discovered the intrigue, I did not learn ; most probably from his

communications with the children ; they were his intimates and confidants, and from children a secret speedily leaks out. However, he submitted meekly to his fate ; and, like a great and good man, as he was, he determined patiently and cheerfully to fulfil his destinies. He invited me, indeed, in all simplicity to an entertainment, for which I had long been engaged ; to confess the truth, was deeply immersed and implicated in the guilt of that evening. I think he gave in to the project with less difficulty because he was aware of the deceit that was to be played upon the discreet Rachel.

I was introduced to the comely and placid offering, and she was placed under my immediate care. She made no resistance ; so, without a struggle, she was quickly and quietly launched into the worldling's paradise. She admired the long vista of lamps ; she admired all she saw, and with more warmth and animation than one could have anticipated. She asked me repeatedly what it was. ' I am not at liberty to tell you '. She repeated the inquiry many times, and pressed me to inform her. I was faithful to my promise, to the solemn league and covenant.

' Is it not Vauxhall ? '

' I am not to tell you ; you are never to know '.

' Is it so wrong, then ? It is so delightful, it is a great pity it is so wrong ! '

We walked about arm in arm ; we went everywhere, saw everything, and the fair victim approved of all she saw : sometimes in articulate language, and with a strength of expression that surprised me, but more commonly with a quiet murmur of pleasure, cooing like a dove. Yet she was oppressed by a certain timidity ; she kept her hand fast in my arm, often pressing closely against my side : my placid, sleek, well-fed mate imparted to me some of that genial warmth out of the copious stores of animal heat with which her portly person was so abundantly furnished. When she was more especially delighted with the novelty and entertainment of the evening, she whispered in my ear imploringly, and with a pretty beseeching look, ' Friend, thou wilt not remark, lest Friends should observe ! ' Those we met were commonly too much occupied with their own concerns to notice us ; nevertheless, some persons viewed us with astonishment, staring hard at my companion and myself, for she was in full costume. How much soever Friends might observe on other topics, they could not cavil at her dress ; that at least was perfectly unexcep-

tionable and irreproachable. Bysshe, for his part, was very happy ; entirely taken up, engrossed, captivated, by the charming lady through whose contrivance we had been brought to Vauxhall. A mere mundane critic might have declared that there was a most desperate flirtation between them ; a more spiritualized observer, a poet and a philosopher like himself, would discern in their union a strong and close sympathy, and would describe and designate it as such.

The display of fireworks in those days was but a poor affair, yet the dark shade of the lofty trees gave a strong contrast and relief to the sparks, and flames, and fire. Shelley, as it will be readily believed, was passionately fond of fireworks. He often had a rocket, a Roman candle, a few squibs and Catherine wheels at hand, and he would tempt children, of the like juvenile tastes with himself, into the garden or field to let them off there. He had disappeared stealthily from the drawing-room ; the cracking and fizzing under the window, and the shouts and laughter of the enraptured children, explained the motive of his absence.

We had exhilarated and fortified ourselves with large potations of generous tea before we set out on our deceitful and treacherous mission, and we returned in good time to an abundant supper, which a long promenade in the cool night air made most acceptable.

I never met with my sleek, soft, murmuring mate again ; her visit to London was short, her residence was in the country. She confided her history to me during our confidential walk ; there was neither mystery nor romance in it. Rachel's father was a Quaker apothecary of the first magnitude in the west of England. ' Friend, thou wilt not remark, lest Friends should observe ! ' These words were softly whispered in my ear a hundred times at least by the plump daughter of Ephraim Smooth, and they seem to be a formula which young Quakeresses use, when the engaging creatures are conscious that they are doing wrong.

I once spent some weeks at Christmastide in the country with an agreeable and accomplished family, and there I met a young Quaker lady. In her plain cap, plain kerchief, and plaited conundrums, by which the female Friends are distinguished from the rest of their sex, she was one of the loveliest creatures I ever beheld ; a being of exquisite and sought out beauty. Hannah was passionately fond of chess, and I had the happiness to play with her for hours ; she frequently

murmured with languid delight, and when the game became peculiarly interesting, she would softly whisper, sometimes almost inaudibly, 'Friend, thou wilt not remark, lest Friends should observe!'

That strict religionists, strict moralists even, should forbid cards and games of hazard, is not unreasonable; but nobody ever plays at chess for money; it is purely a contest of skill, chance has no share in the event; what, then, can there be reprehensible in it? What is there in the noble game of Kings for Friends to observe upon? Do the prim observers quarrel with the royal, aristocratic, martial titles of the pieces? Well, then, let the castles be called windmills; the knights, mounted millers, sitting on horseback above sacks of wheat; let the king be a substantial corn-factor, and the queen his wife; let the bishops be a couple of master bakers from Scotland, thorough rogues in grain; so that the designations of the several pieces may sound, not in nobility, but in knavery. The pawns might represent the society of Friends and being of sober uniform colours, and unassuming mien, might well stand for ordinary Quakers.

But what could the contest be? It must not be a battle, or litigation, both war and law being strictly forbidden; the struggle might be for one side to overreach the other in exchanges, to drive the harder bargain, to compel the opponent's king—corn-factor, I should say—to commit an act of bankruptcy, and being unable to avoid, answer, or cover a cheque, to be mated. One of the contending firms might be drab, the other slate-coloured, black and white being decidedly too pronounced.

Under such harmless conditions, the amiable members of the Society of Friends might safely engage in friendly struggles upon the sixty-four squares of the board of Grinders, not of Kings, with peace to Penn's ashes.

It is possible that Bysshe was amused at the idea of the hoax that was to be played upon the sweetly placid Rachel, and entered willingly into the scheme of mischief, but he took no concern in the execution, or in the event. He had an antipathy, a rooted aversion, an utter abhorrence of everything low and vulgar, and there is nothing so vulgar as dissent, as the preposterous impertinence of a Dissenter, who is always to be laughed at, and heartily, but never to be persecuted. I called one morning—it was on a Sunday, I think—at the house of a common friend, to meet Bysshe, by appointment, for

some expedition or other ; he did not attend, as was too frequently the case with him ; no human being, no poet was ever less punctual : he had no perception, no notion of time ; a divine nature lives not in time, but in eternity. Although I did not meet him on that occasion, I saw a personage of some distinction, for Madame D'Arblay called. She expected to find, or professed to have expected to have found, her very dear friend, Madame de B. ; of course she would have been ravished by her presence, she was desolated at her absence.

The favoured novelist had just returned from France, to which country few English went in those days, and from which still fewer returned. Her conversation, therefore, would have been very interesting if she had told us anything to the purpose ; but she did not, and it was not so. She returned from an unsuccessful chase after her husband.

Whenever a Frenchman marries an Englishwoman, for some six years or so, he makes her a most exemplary husband ; and then, all at once, he plants her ; plants her at once and for ever. Thus had the Chevalier served the gifted authoress of *Evelina* and *Cecilia*. He, a singularly handsome man, as it was affirmed, for the accustomed period had been a good, almost too good a husband—too good, certainly, to last—and then suddenly he withdrew himself ; withdrew himself, entirely against his inclination, but under the iron influence of some painful, irresistible, and indescribable necessity, as his frequent and very affectionate letters abundantly testified, with often-repeated assurances, that he should never know a moment's peace of mind until his return at some remote and indefinite period.

The efforts of the most eloquent pen had failed to recall the General, or even to obtain any specific limitation of the probable duration of the term of his absence and anguish.

The forsaken wife at last determined to go in quest of him herself, and to terminate his sufferings by bringing the fugitive back to happiness. With infinite difficulty and after long delays, and by moving heaven and earth, she had obtained a passport and permission to land in France. She gave us the details at great length. She procured, with some trouble, an open boat, and set out with her maid-servant.

They reached the French coast, at what point I have forgotten ; as they neared the land the soldiers on the beach made signs to the boat to retire ; and as it still approached the shore, they fired their muskets, and the balls were heard

whizzing over their heads. The boatmen resolved to return, Madame was determined to remain ; after some disputes the mistress and her maid were lifted out of the boat and set down, up to the middle in the water, with their portmanteaus on their heads. When the soldiers perceived that the formidable boat was retreating, they ceased to fire, but they took no notice of the poor women, who remained in the sea, the tide rising gradually until it reached their chins. Just in time however to save them from drowning, a boat came to them from the beach, and they were landed thoroughly wet, but unhurt.

Profound as the Chevalier's affliction was, it had left no traces behind ; every inquiry was vain, every research fruitless ; no tidings could be heard of the disconsolate husband. It was inconceivable, but it was true, that he still persevered in withdrawing himself from his beloved wife, and from the young pledge of their affections : the General did not choose to redeem the pledge.

All the affecting and romantic incidents of the unavailing pursuit were related with a copious stream of conjugal eloquence in a discourse that threatened to be interminable. The effect of this celebrated lady's conversation, like her written narratives, was often to inspire astonishment, but certainly not always implicit belief. The feelings of the wife finally gave place to those of the daughter. We had never seen her father ; we had never heard him play on the organ : we had lived therefore in vain.

It was arranged, that the reproach should be removed forthwith by meeting Evelina on a Sunday afternoon in the chapel at Chelsea Hospital. The appointment was duly kept ; we attended the evening service, heard a heavy voluntary, and some other performances, some of them being very loud, probably to display the power of the instrument ; and we were afterwards presented to the author of the *History of Music*. It was adjudged and decreed that Bysshe should go with us ; he would be delighted, some said. However he took the liberty of judging for himself ; he thought otherwise ; and of acting for himself also ; he was terrified at the bare proposal of listening to such heavenly strains and intellectual conversation, he cloigned himself, and evaded pursuit as effectually as if he had been a goat, or even General D'Arblay himself. Something being said about the music of the ancients, the organist assured us that it had no merit whatever.

Some Greek tunes had been found in an old MS. of Pindar ;

these proved to be altogether intolerable ; notwithstanding he had not only transposed the ancient notation into the modern form, but had also entirely re-arranged them himself. The Doctor's hearers were somewhat bigoted in their favourite opinion of the eminent perfection of Grecian art ; on our way home we ventured to conjecture, that possibly the re-arrangement had some share in making the antique melodies distasteful to modern ears. It was observed, that if the *Iliad* of Homer, having been long lost, had been lately found by the immortal Doctor, and he had not only made the poem public, but had taken the trouble to rewrite it himself from beginning to end, it might be doubted, whether the *Iliad* would have been admired as much in the improved recension, as it had been in the unformed state, in which the world has always possessed it. It was regretted by some of our party needlessly, I thought, that Shelley had missed the opportunity of seeing the famous Madame D'Arblay and of being seen by her. And it was plotted to bring them together ; but the plot, I believe, did not succeed ; and it was quite as well that it did not. They were not suited for each other ; whatever merit Miss Burney had, and no doubt she possessed much, was not to his taste. The daughter of a music-master, who got his bread by giving lessons at Court and to the children of the aristocracy, who had been herself a sort of handmaid to the queen, an unworthy and unpleasant employment, according to her own account of the matter, could be neither more nor less than what she in fact was, a bundle of conventionalities ; and these, however clever and well arranged, would not have proved attractive to the Divine Poet. Her conversation was not without ability, but it was wholly about herself, and the self not being at all interesting, the conversation could not be so.

'The New Zealander must have had a good appetite who wanted to eat you, Burney !' said Charles Lamb.

This remark was not much less applicable to the other members of that distinguished family whom I have seen, than it was to the gallant admiral to whom it was addressed ; by whose misplaced confidence and misplaced obstinacy, as we read in the account of Cooke's first voyage, sixteen men out of a boat's crew of thirty and upwards, commanded by Lieutenant Burney, were captured, roasted and devoured.

Nurses say to their young charges, 'I could eat you up ! I love you so much, I could eat you all up !'

I cannot think that the author of *Queen Mab* would have

wished to eat the author of *Cecilia*, however nicely roasted and done brown.

It has been said by critics who reasoned from false analogies, and were not acquainted with Shelley, 'that it was in him to have walked towards the French Revolution over seas of blood'. For my part, and I knew him well, I am convinced that it was not. We cannot be quite sure, it is true, how any man would have acted in a particular case, unless he had been tried; but severe measures, persecution, and the shedding of blood, were contrary to his gentle nature. Besides, he was entirely without self-conceit; he had nothing of the hard, arrogant self-conceit of Citizen Brissot and his fellows; he was never a doctrinaire. His course was discussion, not doctrine, not dogmatism, not the stern dogmatism of an iron despotism.

The French revolutionists were eminently and conspicuously dogmatical; they could not bear contradiction. Shelley delighted in it. To contradict him flatly, and to dispute with him, endeared the disputant to him. He never proposed to form a code, he never would have accomplished, he never would have attempted it; he would never have got beyond the project of a code; interminable, endless discussion respecting a future code. He never would have set a going the guillotine, as has been inconsiderately affirmed, or kept it going; with him it was all doubt, disputation, discussion: his theories were unformed, incomplete, and especially unpractical. Socrates, as he is delineated by Plato, and whose boast it was that he knew nothing, was his prototype; we cannot conceive Socrates, under any circumstances, playing the part of Danton, or of Robespierre, and sending victims to the scaffold.

I often attempted myself, as others did, to make Shelley acquainted with such of my friends, as I thought might be useful or agreeable to him; from whose society he might have derived amusement or instruction; but the attempt was hardly ever successful. I have sometimes endeavoured to gratify those, who were desirous, naturally and laudably desirous, to cultivate the acquaintance of so remarkable a person, by introducing him to them, by taking him to their houses, or by inviting them to meet him; but my efforts were almost always abortive; these schemes ended in vexation and disappointment. On these occasions only have I been very angry with him; that he should annoy myself alone by his irregularity I could readily pardon, I was accustomed to it; it was our ordinary

course of business ; but it was difficult to be equally patient when he compromised me with others.

People would get up a dinner party, or other entertainment, purely and solely on his account ; others would remain in town for days, for a week or two, even ; or would come from a distance to some point, where he had promised to be found, for the sake of meeting him ; and when they discovered, that this trouble had been taken in vain, and so many inconveniences endured, without gaining the much-desired result, they were vexed and offended, especially the ladies, who ill brook disappointment in any matter upon which their hearts are set. I was the more disconcerted in such cases, because I was conscious that I had most reason to be angry with myself, and with my own folly and credulity in trusting that which was by no means to be trusted. And to be angry and to expostulate on account of such failure and breach of promise, was to chide a waterfall ; to inveigh against the wind, the sea, fire.

It is necessary in this life to pay a price exactly, fully equal to every advantage received by us ; the advantage of the society of my incomparable friend was great, immense ; but it is not to be denied that the price was heavy, and it was rigorously demanded, and punctually paid in full. He took strange caprices, unfounded frights and dislikes, vain apprehensions and panic terrors, and therefore he absented himself from formal and sacred engagements. He was unconscious and oblivious of times, places, persons and seasons ; and falling into some poetic vision, some day-dream, he quickly and completely forgot all that he had repeatedly and solemnly promised ; or he ran away after some object of imaginary urgency and importance, which suddenly came into his head, setting off in vain pursuit of it, he knew not whither. When he was caught, brought up in custody, and turned over to the ladies, with, Behold your King ! to be caressed, courted, admired and flattered, the king of beauty and fancy would too commonly bolt ; slip away, steal out, creep off ; unobserved and almost magically he vanished ; thus mysteriously depriving his fair subjects of his much coveted, long looked for company :

Making it momentary, as a sound ;
Swift, as a shadow ; short, as any dream ;
Brief, as the lightning.

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CHAPTER XXVI

At a late hour, when the assembly was breaking up, and some guests even had gone home, it has happened, although rarely, that he was again in the midst of us ; the poor fellow, looking amazed and terrified, as if he had just come from Heaven, and had there heard God's angels singing before the throne. His flight from society was usually surreptitious and stealthy, but I have observed him to start up hastily, to declare publicly that his presence was imperatively required elsewhere on matters of moment ; and to retreat with as much noise and circumstance as an army breaking up its camp.

We used to meet in our circles some foreign society, especially many French emigrants. I had seen something of these exiles before, and so had Bysshe. His aunt, that is to say, the wife of his father's half-brother, John Shelley, showed much hospitality to the emigrant nobility, and filled the house at Penshurst with disagreeable and unprofitable guests. He spoke with distaste of his visits to Penshurst, except that he greatly admired the place itself, and warmly lauded it. The emigrants, with very few exceptions, seemed to be just the people to be sent out of a country with advantage, but not by any means the people whom any sane man would recall or restore. Their chief characteristic was utter imbecility, rendered still more odious and imbecile by prodigious and exacting pretensions. Some of them doubtless were worthy men, but poor, feeble, helpless creatures ; and many of their clergy were distinguished for a sincere and conspicuous piety, a merit above all human praise. These would go straight to Heaven with their martyred King, the child of St. Louis, and they would be quite at home there ; it was precisely the place for them : but in this wicked world they were very much in the way.

Shelley seldom observed peculiarities of dress, but there was amongst these unfortunates an old fellow, he was a French duke, I believe, whose costume was so extraordinary that even he noticed it, and laughed heartily at the strange disguise. My Lord, the duke, was strongly possessed by Anglomania, which he continued to indulge, although he was paying so dearly for it in purse and in person, and for his countrymen's love of constitutional freedom. He was particularly ambitious to dress exactly like an Englishman, so that he might be taken for one, and after divers failures, he succeeded at last

completely. This was his type ; the purely English, or Anglo-maniacal, habit was this. His coat was of cloth, of that kind of grey called pepper and salt, very light, indeed, much salt, with very little pepper. The waistcoat was of pepper and salt also, but darker, with more pepper. His shorts were of a like material, the pepper predominating, and therefore being darker than the waistcoat ; and his long gaiters were still darker, the darkest of all, being almost entirely pepper, with scarcely any salt.

We were ushered one morning into a room, where this figure of fun was sitting alone. After sundry profound reverences and an exhortation not to despair, for our friends, he was assured and could assure us, would soon appear, he gravely asked me, if he did not look exactly like an Englishman ? If I could possibly suspect that he was a foreigner, a Frenchman ? ' My lord, the duke, does us a very great honour in desiring so much to resemble us, and so closely ! ' My answer was accepted by the Anglomaniac as altogether satisfactory ; but Bysshe broke forth into a shrieking peal of laughter, and rushed headlong out of the room.

' Is your friend taken ill, sir ? '

' He is afflicted with a spasmodic cough '.

' Poor fellow ! Poor young man ! '

And the good-natured, unsuspecting peer seriously recommended that Eau de Luce should be frequently rubbed on his chest by a soft, warm hand.

' Eau de Luce is easily procured, but where will he find the soft, warm hand ? '

' Oh ! with his truly charming physiognomy, he will very easily find that ! '

I repeated the gracious and graceful compliment to the culprit with the deserved warning :

' If you laugh at the poor old fellow's fashionable English suit again, you will be an ingrate, a thorough wretch ! I will not shelter you any more. You shall repair his wounded honour ; you shall meet him in Hyde Park, and empty your quarrel with the single rapier ! '

The unexpected, vehement, and irrepressible bursts of laughter were often distressing, and, indeed, perilous.

I found Shelley one day in Chancery Lane, standing in the middle of the street in front of the gateway of Lincoln's Inn, and staring about him, as if some Genie had just set him down in the middle of an unknown city. I took his arm, and led

him into the common dining-hall of Lincoln's Inn. The few and ancient *Vice-Chancellors*, Sir Thomas Plumer, was sitting on the bench, looking as usual, exceedingly freshened, red-haired, humorous, and warlike. Half-a-dozen attorneys were seated with their backs to him in *indolent* apathy, occasionally putting forth a leg by way of a change, and looking at the *thor*, as if they had never seen one before, and yawning in immense *vacillancy*. Three or four *dullards*, the *inler* portion of a dull bar who practised in his court, were addressing his *Honour* in turns, or squabbling altogether at once. Presently one of them said, with a certain deadly *irreflexion*, as if he were uttering something new: 'I am very sure your Honour will not open a *door*; for if your Honour were once to open a *door*, the *door* being open, as your Honour very well knows . . .'. And thereupon, not without a certain resolute warmth, the *Court* interpreted: 'Sir, you are perfectly right: of one thing at least I am quite clear; I am determined I will never open a *door*!' This was too much: with a sharp shriek of fiendish laughter *Byrnie* darted wildly out of the hall. To do him justice, Sir Thomas was a good-natured man: he looked compassionately towards the flying, mirth-stricken *door*, and seemed to say to himself: 'Poor fellow! He has been taken ill; it is some fit! But I will never open a door for all that: I am quite determined'. And he continued to *prate* and to prate on in confirmation of his fixed determination. I stole out quietly in the midst of the old draughtsman's *tautology* and endless repetitions, spun-yarns of foxy, picked-out *eloquence*, and joined the fugitive. I found him musing before the door of the hall: he said to me very seriously: 'How strange it is, one wanders over half the world, comes back again, and always finds the same people in the same places saying the selfsame things; and saying a thousand times things not worth saying once!'

If all the world
Should in a pet of temperance feed on pulse.

Shelley fed much on pulse at different periods, and for a long time together, but never in a pet; on the contrary, through a calm, deliberate choice, and a sincere conviction of the propriety and superior salubrity of such food. His letters inform us, that he had occasionally restricted himself in great measure, if not entirely, to a vegetable diet. What first suggested to him the abstinence from flesh does not anywhere appear;

whether his own feelings and reflections, or the advice of others given orally, or in books. It was not until the spring of the year 1813 that he entered upon a full and exact course of vegetable diet. His Pythagorean, or Brahminical, existence, and his intimate association with the amiable and accomplished votaries of a Return to Nature, was perhaps the prettiest and most pleasing portion of his poetical, philosophical, and lovely life. His nutriment had ever been, and always was, simple ; consisting, as has been already mentioned, principally of bread eaten by itself, or with some very slight and frugal condiment. Spirituous liquors he never tasted ; beer, rarely. He never called for, purchased, or drew, wine for his own drinking ; but if it came in his way, and the company was not disagreeable to him, he would sit at table a while after dinner, and take two or three glasses of any white wine, uniformly selecting the weakest. I will not be hard upon him, and say that he absolutely disliked port wine—what Oxford man ever did ?—but he had unpleasant associations with it. The sight of port wine reminded him of his father, who loved it dearly, and drank it freely ; not to any reprehensible excess, but as a country gentleman and a justice of peace ought to drink it.

I have often thought, and I have now and then even hinted, that if he could only bring himself to drink a bottle of choice port with his father, to sit sociably with him for an hour or two, and patiently to hear the old squire extol his wine and himself, they would get on much better together, and many serious difficulties and inconveniences would be avoided. But it was all in vain ; my efforts as a peace-maker were thrown away. The alliance was impracticable—impossible. It may be very well to pour oil and wine into wounds, they may heal ; but it is useless to stir the two liquors together, they will never mix.

Poor Bysshe was doomed to encounter many of those severe trials which wring the heart and wring it so hard. As the happiest period of his life was that spent at Oxford, so also was it the jolliest. He partook of the Oxonian potation, negus, with a real relish, and drank it freely, like a true and studious Academic, as he was.

After reading for many hours, and walking for many hours, during the livelong day, indeed, the peripatetic student could not but enjoy his supper ; and after supper—for the Genius of the place would admit of no denial, or excuse—two tumblers of hot negus, each containing two full glasses of sherry,

followed quietly and in order, as the silent planets pursue their nightly courses. He did this then, did it freely, and thought no evil—in mental blindness. Afterwards, his eyes were opened. For I have reminded him of it; proposing, once in a way, a recurrence to old habits. But the child of light wondered how he could have been guilty of such a piece of odious and disgusting sensuality, sometimes adding, 'I ought to have been shot for it!'

Sobriety was the exception, not the rule, at our very learned and most orthodox University. The college servants at Oxford were good, but muzzy, as the best servants often are, with an abiding and perennial muzziness, being constantly inspired with the soft inspiration of strong, sound ale, which flowed copiously from the buttery. When the ascetic young poet returned to Nature, alcohol in every shape—even in the subdued shape of negus—was strictly prohibited.

If his diet, fluid and solid, was cool, not less cool was his dress. I never remember to have seen Bysshe in a great-coat or cloak, even in the coldest weather. He wore his waistcoat much or entirely open; sometimes there was an ellipsis of his waistcoat; it was not expressed, but understood. Unless he was compelled to cover it by main force, he had his throat bare; the neckcloth being cast aside, lost, over the hills and far away, and the collar of his shirt unbuttoned. In the street or road he reluctantly wore a hat, but in fields and gardens his little round head had no other covering than his long, wild, ragged locks.

The poor, imaginative, creative head was plunged several times a-day into a basonful of cold water, which he invariably filled brimful, in order to throw as much water as possible on his feet and the floor. That the dripping locks might dry, he thrust, ever and anon, the fingers of both hands through them, and set them on end

With hair upstaring then, like reeds, not hair.

However, the abstinence from wraps, from great-coats and cloaks, was a characteristic of the age as well as of the individual. In the last of his notes on *Queen Mab*, as a commentary on the lines

No longer now
He slays the lamb, that looks him in the face,
And horribly devours his mangled flesh,

the author has set forth his views on the subject of vegetable diet ; it would be presumptuous, therefore, for another to discuss it ; if it were not so indeed, most assuredly I am altogether inadequate to the task ; and it is needless to reprint here what is in the hands of every reader. My impression is, that the matter contained in this long note was published originally in a separate, independent form. Whether I ever received a copy of the little work, if there was any such work, I do not remember ; it is certain that I cannot lay my hand upon it at present. For some months, for some years, I was in the thick of it, for I lived much with a select and most estimable society of persons, who had returned to nature, and of course I heard much discussion on the topic of vegetable diet. I never presumed to take a part myself in their arguments, for two reasons : first, because I heard quite enough of the matter, to say the least, without entering into the controversy ; secondly, and principally, because I did not understand it, and was not qualified to arrive at a sound conclusion. That some persons may be competent to determine the question, I do not deny ; I will only affirm that I never was so fortunate as to fall in with even one of them. I did more than discuss, I conformed ; not through faith, but for good fellowship, and because it was an agreeable experiment, if that can be called an experiment by which nothing is to be tried or discovered ; perhaps I should rather say, that it was an agreeable change. Solomon says, and he says wisely : ' Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith '. My kind friends asserted, and they were wise in their generation—whether also in their choice of diet, I cannot decide—that a dinner of herbs, a vegetable dinner, is better than roast beef and love and friendship therewith. Certainly their vegetable dinners were delightful ; elegant and excellent repasts ; looking only to the table and the viands placed upon it, and not to those who sat round it

In solemn troops and sweet societies.

Flesh, fowl, fish, game, never appeared ; nor eggs bodily in their individual capacity, nor butter in the gross : the two latter articles were admitted into cookery, it is true, but as sparingly as possible, and their presence was provisional, interlocutory, under protest, as culinary aids not approved of, and soon to be dispensed with. The injunction extended to

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shell-fish. John Horne Tooke proposed shrimps and treacle to one of the fathers of the church vegetant here on earth ; the treacle might have been accepted, but every individual shrimp would have been black-balled. We had soups in great variety, that seemed the more delicate from the absence of meat. There were vegetables of every kind, the finest and best of the kind, dressed with care and skill ; either plainly or stewed, and otherwise artfully and scientifically arranged and disguised. Puddings, tarts, confections, sweets, abounded. Cheese was under the ban—anathematized, excommunicate. Milk and cream might not be taken unreservedly; however, they were allowed to form ingredients in puddings, and to be poured sparingly into tea, as an indulgence to the weakness of neophytes, tender plants. Fruits of every description were welcomed—hailed rapturously, received with plaudits, as if the goddess, Nature, herself stood bodily before her votaries. We luxuriated, ran riot in tea and coffee, and sought variety occasionally in cocoa and chocolate. Bread and butter and buttered toast were eschewed ; but bread-cakes, plain seed-cakes, were liberally divided amongst the faithful.

An epicure, fond of variety, would do well to adopt vegetable diet, now and then, for a day or two, as a change, for the mere gratification ; as ' a piece of odious and disgusting sensuality '. It ought not to be concealed, that to be agreeable, at least to a person of refined habits, vegetable fare must be good ; consisting of the best materials after their kind, perfectly well prepared. Otherwise it degenerates into fasting and mortification. This species of self-denial, these ascetic restraints, may have their use in a spiritual aspect, and for the soul's health, but that is altogether a different consideration, and not at all to the present purpose. The country is better suited to the practice of the bloodless regimen than a city. A well-stocked garden, furnishing fresh vegetables in profusion, an orchard yielding ripe fruit in unlimited abundance for present consumption, and for the winter's store, will feed luxuriously a hundred Pythagoreans. The climate of the South would be propitious, and its varied produce. Naples, as it struck me most forcibly, being present there, the fertile and fair island of Sicily doubtless—in a word, the lovely kingdom of the two Sicilies—would be the true Eden, the earthly Paradise, the very home for the penitent prodigal son, who had grace enough to return to his all-bountiful mother. On the shores of the Mediterranean flesh is not tempting, the fish is seldom inviting

to a Northern palate, but the pleasant regions are most rich in inanimate aliments. Macaroni and the other pastes of Italy were valuable helps. Onions, variously concocted, and rendered as mild and innocuous as the dogmas of Pythagoras, were the staple seasoning; and mushrooms and their cryptogamous congeners, were zests of inestimable value. The vegetable table is not economical, at least in London, even after making a liberal deduction for the absence of all fermented liquors, if it be spread in a comfortable and satisfactory style. In the country, probably, it is otherwise. In Italy, at Croton, where Pythagoras lived and taught, it is certain that his discipline was not less exemplary and commendable for thrift, than for humanity and temperance.

In all opinions, in every sect, there is uniformly an extreme party, and so was it with the votaries of vegetable diet. Some held that the effect of fire on aliment was to render it insalubrious. Man should live, they told us, on raw vegetable substances: on salads, apples, peas, beans, and cauliflowers, uncooked; on raw meal, raw carrots, turnips, and potatoes. They rejected the discovery, or the theft, of Prometheus, banishing fire from their kitchens. Every church has its miracles: I was credibly informed that the patriarch, who was very far in advance of his age, once actually ate a raw potato. I never heard that he ate a second; and the Rationals indeed affirm, that he only talked of eating the first. There are, moreover, contrarieties and contradictions in all schools of philosophers, and not the fewest, or the least startling, are apparent amongst the champions of the extreme party. According to the advocates of absolute, universal crudity, nothing was to be cooked, except that which does not require cookery—water. Water was to be distilled, to be subjected to the violent action of otherwise forbidden fire, which rendered it disagreeable, odious. Water thus prepared had a disgusting taste; it was gravely pronounced to be only an empyreuma, but it was not more palatable after this hard name had emanated from authority. The Magi, the water kings, found, or fancied they had found, after a clumsy and tedious analysis, a small bit of lead in the water, which was derived, they said, from the leaden pipes, in which water, to our utter destruction, was conveyed. I saw the trophy, for it was exhibited in triumph. To eyes only partially unsophisticated, it looked like a single pellet of dust-shot: if it had been sent forth as a missile, it might have proved formidable to a

fly, but would not have knocked a wren off her perch ; yet was it to kill and murder half London. Nay, more : the presence of arsenic had been detected in the most limpid spring water ; half a grain of the metal in several tons of water. Arsenic, we are taught, may be found, although in infinitely small quantities, in almost all substances. In minute, infinitesimal doses, it is not poisonous, not injurious, we are assured, but salutary. One Sunday morning, we actually assisted at an arsenic hunt : we dropped in upon the patriarch who, ever zealous in the good cause, had extemporized a laboratory in his parlour. He was certainly by no means blood-thirsty, but a mild and most merciful man—the best of men ; nevertheless, he had made himself look like a tiger ; he had given himself the aspect of a royal Bengal tiger. He was dressed in a suit of black, of rusty black : coat, waistcoat, shorts and gaiters, were all of cloth, which, in the good old times, had been black. He was busy with his alembics, in hot pursuit of arsenic, luting his retorts with pipe clay ; and he had been wiping the clay off his fingers, from time to time, all the morning, not with a towel, but by drawing his hands across his clothes ; so that when we entered the study of the alchemist, he was barred and brindled all over with white stripes, on a dark ground. He had completely satisfied himself, he said, of the insalubrity and deleteriousness of water undistilled, and he undertook to convince us of the correctness of his conclusions, but chiefly, I must say, by nods and winks, and mysterious signs. So awkward and credulous a chemist, by experiments so clumsily conducted, and with so imperfect an apparatus, ought surely to be able to find anything in anything.

I heard of small parties vegetating in the country, dotted about here and there, who had adopted the vegetable diet, and were steadily pursuing it ; and I even met with some specimens of them. They were good, simple people enough, I dare say, but of no talents, note, or mark ; for the most part Dissenters, I believe, and far gone in Dissent, and consequently ready and ripe for any crotchets.

Joe Ritson was before my time, I think ; certainly I never fell in with him. He had some business as a conveyancer, some reputation as an antiquary ; but as a feeder on vegetable substances, he put forward his theories with such vehemence and wild extravagance, as to be stigmatized, perhaps unjustly, as a wretched maniac. He called sheep, oxen, and pigs ‘ our

fellow creatures', as undeniably they are in a certain sense; and he inferred from that appellation, that we ought not to eat their flesh, or put them to death. A flea, a bug, a louse, or a tapeworm, is also a fellow creature; and what then? So likewise is a cabbage: Horace speaks of slaying a leek and an onion.

So long as I observed the vegetable rule myself, I observed it very exactly, according to the canons which I had received from the doctors of the gentle, tolerant, bloodless church, because my mind was naturally disposed for precision and strictness. But Shelley was a creature of impulses; so long as he was in company with the authorities, his practice was unexceptionable; but not so, it is to be feared, when he was left to himself to pursue unimpeded his own erratic course. He could follow no other laws than the golden law of doing instantly whatever the inclination of the moment prompted. I have heard that during the period when he was pointed out as an exemplary Pythagorean, he was one day found in the lake district, where he had been wandering alone on foot, in a very small room at a very small inn, with a very small circular table before him, and upon this was an enormous round of cold boiled beef, from which the famished philosopher was helping himself freely, as if it had been a brown loaf, or a piece of canonical seed-cake. At this deflection from the path of rectitude, nobody who knew him could be surprised; but I confess I was somewhat astonished at the aberration of another high authority, a defender of the faith, which I myself witnessed. After a long walk one Sunday in the summer, we called upon our friend to take tea with him, which we had promised to do, for his family was absent, and he was left quite alone: it would be an act of charity. When we arrived he was still at table; by some casualty the hour of dinner had been postponed. We were shown into the dining-room; he was not a little disconcerted, and not without reason. There was a sufficient supply of vegetables on the board, no doubt, but there was also a fine roast fillet of veal, and upon this he was experimentalizing with a carving-knife and fork. For some moments he sat mute; when he had recovered a little, he said: 'My servants are carnivorous, they are cannibals; this meat is for them; but I had it brought up just to look at it, to see how they are treated, poor things!'

'But you have been eating it!' Bysshe exclaimed, with as much horror as if it had been the body of Pelops.

'Why, as it was here, I thought there could be no great harm whatever in just tasting the stuffing. Veal stuffing, you know, is merely bread and herbs and spices, and other little matters chopped up together'.

He had tasted the stuffing, evidently, and in cutting it his knife must have slipped, or he had not nicely discriminated between the stuffing and the meat.

There was another remarkable instance of transgression ; it was at headquarters. I did not see it, but I heard of it ; we all heard of it, and it made the ears of the elect tingle. The wife of the patriarch, the primate of all vegetables, was brought to bed, most auspiciously of course ; disease and death had no more dominion over her. The prescribed regimen during her confinement was cold pease-pudding with a slice of dry bread ; and with this simple fare she was going on prosperously, charmingly. Mrs. A. called to see her friend, as soon as one lady may call upon another in such a case, and was gratified with the pleasing aspect of such a rapid recovery. It was most important to mothers ; a rule had been obtained to show cause, why the curse of Eve should not be set aside. It was time to dinc, under the salubrious system of anti-phlogistic diet punctuality was essential. With a surgeon's wife there is no need of apologies, and all ceremony in a sick-room is quite out of place. Dinner was served. The lady in the straw ate a mouthful or two of the cold pease-pudding, and crumbled the bread to the wonder and edification of her visitor. The latter took her leave, and on her way downstairs she met something not less wonderful, but far less edifying, a plump roast fowl went smoking on, as it was being carried incautiously from the cold vegetable kitchen to the lady's bedroom. What news for Bedford Row ! What a treat for Bedford Row ! The blunt surgeon was no friend to vegetable diet ; it was affirmed that he was even exceedingly hostile to its assertors and defenders. Consequently, as soon as the emperor and autocrat of all the blue pills heard of the mission of the roast fowl, and he heard of it very soon, the carnivorous malignant spread the glad tidings far and wide. Medical people swarmed about the meek followers of vegetable diet, like wasps about a pot of honey ; whether as spies to see the nakedness of the land, or to observe more nearly the regimen, that was to cure and to prevent all diseases.

To such as had adopted this mode of living with sanatory views, supposing it would benefit their health, that is to say

to the greater number of the modern Pythagoreans, and were so credulous as to believe that the professors of the art of healing knew more of the matter, than those who know nothing whatever, they were welcome : they encouraged their advances and cultivated their acquaintance. Consequently, I saw something at that period of medical society ; I cannot say that, upon the whole, it was agreeable. Some of the therapeutics were tolerably good company, but not one of them, so far as I remember, was particularly pleasant. For the most part, they were mere prigs, living glossaries of hard words, conceited, intolerant, and dogmatical, to a ludicrous excess, on points which, at best, were extremely doubtful. They were given up helplessly and hopelessly to the last new whim of the day ; ascribed and bound as serfs to some recent, new-fangled crotchet : half-taught or quarter-taught—sometimes considerably less than quarter-taught. Jealous, envious, illiberal, and quarrelsome ; detracting from and backbiting each other ; and too frequently epicureans, obtruding and thrusting in men's faces a low, offensive, and shallow materialism. When these people are content steadily to follow the established praxis, they can cure some diseases and mitigate others ; but if they begin to generalize, to write, or discourse, of the healthful in the abstract, they are sadly to seek. On that head all mankind are equally ignorant ; unprofessional persons do not venture far, and therefore they do not expose themselves much ; but adepts, as they esteem themselves, are bolder ; they go far out to sea, out of sight of land, and are wrecked and drowned in the unfathomable ocean of error.

Sir Joseph Banks, discoursing about the propriety and expediency of excluding medical applicants, as far as it was practicable, from the Royal Society, said : ' Their love of science is commonly all stuff and sham. The privilege of placing three letters of the alphabet after the name is considered of importance, and is only sought as a puff and advertisement. It is but newly gilding the pestle and mortar over the door of the shop, in order to attract customers '. This rule, as it was laid down by the president—a golden rule, it should seem—has been pretty steadily adhered to, I have heard ; whereat these very crusty folks are often in high dudgeon, and sometimes explode in a very diverting manner.

In law, physic, and divinity, it is universally acknowledged that extensive, sweeping, and fundamental changes are equally required, and can no longer be refused ; but of no profession

will the members ever reform themselves ; amendments must always come from without :

*By foreign hands those dying eyes were closed,
By foreign hands those decent limbs composed.*

I fancy eyes are to be closed, any shops of injustice and iniquity to be shut up ; if any limbs, decent or indecent, are to be set in order, it is plain that it can only be effected by foreign hands :

By strangers honoured, and by strangers mourned.

They must be utter strangers, foreigners from a far, distant, and very strange land indeed, who honour certain subsisting abuses, and who would mourn them when they had been completely and finally removed. Whilst I pursued the pure and most merciful diet, I was often asked : ' How can you be so cruel to yourself ? ' There was no cruelty in the case. When I had abandoned it, the question was : ' Why did you ever relinquish what you found to be so agreeable ? Why did you ever give it up ? ' I answered, half in jest, half in earnest : ' Because I found that I was growing too good for this wicked world ; getting too moral, too wise, too pure, too virtuous to live in a faithless and perverse generation '. My answer was always received with laughter, and indeed it was laughable and ridiculous enough ; and yet there was some truth in it, as there often is in sayings that provoke laughter. Why does a man ever give anything up ? Why does he ever take to anything new ? These are questions more easily asked than answered. The intellect and the senses, physical and moral, are lighter, as it were, under the influence of a light diet. A complete renunciation of all fermented, stimulating, intoxicating liquors was coupled with the abstinence from flesh. The nonsense usually talked after dinner was too insupportably nonsensical, unless the faculties of the hearer were dimmed as well as those of the speaker. The ordinary commonplaces of life seemed too commonplace to be borne by an understanding that is always clear and cloudless. Sympathy is indispensable to a sentient being, and, in order to sympathize with dull fellows, a certain amount of dulness is demanded. Possibly the mind needs repose as well as the body : to rest, to sleep, not only during the night, but in the working hours of day ; and the soporifics of a heavy diet, and

composing, sedative, stupefying drinks have their office and use.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE sale of Horne Tooke's library caused a lively interest, because it had been his habit to write notes in his books. From the specimens which I met with, these annotations would seem to be of no great value. Always trifling, often scurrilous and abusive, they did not reflect much credit on the annotator. Nevertheless, public curiosity was strong, and people bid with spirit against one another, to obtain possession of the annotated volumes. Mr. N. had presented his friend with an early copy of *The Return to Nature*; and he was most anxious to procure the important work, enriched with the important notes of a distinguished scholar, philologist, and philosopher. Accordingly, he commissioned a friend, who was to attend the sale, to purchase it for him, and to go as far as fifty guineas. The anxious author lay awake the whole of the night before the day when his work was to be put up, thinking of the severe competition that would so soon ensue; and as soon as it was light, he dispatched a note, authorizing his friend, should it be necessary, as most probably it would, to offer one hundred guineas. In the course of the morning, it occurred to him that it would be a pity to lose an inestimable treasure through ill-timed parsimony: he hastened to the house of his mandatary, to request him to extend the bidding to two hundred guineas. He could not expect to obtain it for less; and, in truth, it would be dirt cheap at that price. To his dismay, he came too late; his friend was already gone; the opportunity was lost, lost for ever! He returned home in great agitation, but gradually comforted himself by believing that Government would most assuredly purchase it for an enormous sum, and then he might hope to get a sight of it. Surely his college friend, Canning, would procure for him that gratification.

In the midst of his hopes and fears, his friend entered the room, with a thin octavo volume in his hand.

'Well, N., I have got your book for you! Here it is!'

'Did you really get it for one hundred guineas?'

'No! no!'

'I am glad you did not let it pass you. Two hundred guineas, I suppose. I shall never forget your kindness! Stop, I will write you a cheque for the money!'

'You need not do that. It is a six shilling book, you know; it was put up at one shilling. Nobody bid for it; so I offered eighteenpence, and it was knocked down to me instantly. Here it is, as good as new! It has never been cut open'.

The self-satisfaction of an author may be checked for a moment, but happily it cannot be killed; if it be nipped a while in the bud, speedily, by the wise dispensation of a merciful Providence, it doth revive again. His mercy, fortunately for us, is over all his works, and more particularly over all the works of all his writing creatures—good, bad, and indifferent. In a short time, therefore, after this cheap purchase, we heard:

'My poor friend, John Horne Tooke, was the wisest and best of men, in thought, word, and deed; a true philosopher, always consistent, always like himself! Look here', and the uncut, unopened volume was adduced in proof. 'He would not read such a work as this in a cursory way. He could never bring himself to skim it over; he felt its importance, and the importance of the subject; he intended to take it in hand, to go regularly through it, to weigh every argument, to illustrate it with an ample commentary; and, until he could find leisure, it would have taken him a long time, a very long time, to have done it justice; so, until then, he would not even cut it open. There it is! Look at it! It was just like him! It was his way! Poor fellow!'

To draw an illustration in a like matter from a similar neglect of an author—one not breathing the elegance of Eton, or of the classical Christ Church, but of a rough, wild disciple of some Scottish University—I will add one more instance:

I once took up a book in the reading-room of the British Museum: it was the only copy I ever saw. I never read the work myself, but I have been told that it is rather a sensible production, and treats fairly enough of the West India Islands, proves the benefits of Slavery, and shows, faithfully and fairly, that the Blacks were then, and not without reason, contented and happy. It was a presentation copy from a F.R.S. to the venerable President—to Sir Joseph Banks—whose library was acquired after his death by the British Museum. There was a complimentary flourish on a blank leaf at the beginning, in the hand-writing of the author. Never-

theless, this volume also was unopened, and probably for the self-same reason. That great and good man, and distinguished naturalist—and such Sir Joseph undoubtedly was in his special department—had not cut open a page, or read a single line, and never intended to do so until he should happen to find himself in a position to treat the volume as it deserved to be treated: if not carefully to weigh and perpend the writer's statements, and to light them up by a lucid and ample commentary.

Did you ever see John Horne Tooke? Who ever saw him? I says the fly, with my little eye, I saw John Horne Tooke. With my own eyes, little or great, I saw him once. He was a fine, venerable old man—a gentleman polite with the politeness of the old school. I was walking with a friend, one day, on Wimbledon Common, near his house, and we fell in with him. He greeted my friend cordially, shaking hands with him heartily. 'I have not seen you for a long time; you never come near me now! Come and dine with me some Sunday—any Sunday. And bring your young friend with you; I shall be glad to see him'. And he bowed to me in the antique style, taking his hat quite off his head, like a fine old English gentleman, one of the old school. 'You know where to find me, and at what hour I dine. But, let me see, I shall hardly know how to entertain you! You have returned to Nature, little N——, have you not? You have withdrawn into the wilderness, like your precursor; and you live, like him, upon locusts and wild honey, do you not? I have no locusts and wild honey for you, but I will come as near as I can. You shall have shrimps, and treacle, little N——, and plenty of them, I promise you, and these will do nearly as well. So mind you come soon'.

With regret I add that the visit was never paid. It was proposed, moreover, to introduce Bysshe to him. He will be delighted with Shelley, and Shelley will be delighted with him. This was very probable, but unfortunately the author of the *Diversions of Purley* died before the meeting was brought about.

'Did you notice that he called me "Little N——?" He always called me so; it was a term of endearment with him. He always addressed William Godwin as "Little Godwin".' The epithet 'Little' was more applicable to William Godwin than to my friend. 'Did you know John Horne Tooke? Did you ever see him?' I once asked a lady of unusual

attainments, who had been acquainted with many of the men of talent and celebrity of her day. 'I did not know him. I only saw him once: and that was casually, and by a mere accident. Mr. Fenwick took me one morning into the House of Lords, to see the place, which I had never entered before. There was a gentleman standing by the bar, engaged in earnest conversation—disputing, I may say—with a bishop. "Do you see that person talking with the bishop? It is the celebrated John Horne Tooke". I immediately drew near him, to catch, if possible, what he said. I heard but little; however, that little was characteristic. "It is a gerund, sir!" said the bishop. "A gerund! Impossible! There is no such thing as a gerund, my lord. There are no gerunds in any language, I assure you. There is no such thing as a gerund!"'

The following anecdote was generally current soon after the death of the illustrious etymologist. It was believed by many; what truth there is in it I know not. John Horne Tooke had published, long ago, the first part of the *Diversions of Purley*. It was read with wonder and delight. A second part appeared after a considerable interval; it was upon the same plan as the former portion, but it was certainly far less amusing. It was understood that he was occupied for several years in the composition of the third, the last and the most important part; in which he was to unfold the nature of the chief word in every sentence: of the word, the verb. It was long before he could content himself with his own peculiar mode of handling this difficult division of grammar; but at last the third volume also was finished. He delivered the precious manuscript in a sealed packet to his friend and pupil, Sir Francis Burdett, an interlocutor in the Purley dialogues, under the initial B., with a strict injunction to publish the book immediately after the decease of the author, but on no account sooner; the discoveries in grammatical science being far too weighty to be communicated to the world during the life of the inventor. A short time—a very few days only, some said, before his death, he desired B. to bring the packet. It was brought to him accordingly. He took it out of his pupil's hands, threw it instantly upon the fire, standing over it until it was entirely consumed, without uttering a word. The matter was frequently and sometimes vehemently discussed. The disappointed curiosity of the learned censured B. sharply, and probably unjustly. He did

not know for what purpose the deposit was demanded. If he had known—if the command had been, 'Bring the manuscript, that I may destroy it'—he might have expostulated, but could he have withheld it? Consequently, through one man's obedience, we are ignorant what the verb really is; probably we shall never know. We only know with certainty that there is no such thing as a gerund. With this scrap of knowledge we must even be contented; the rest is a sealed book to us, and worse, it is a book sealed up and burned.

I have been informed by persons acquainted with the habits of study of John Horne Tooke, that he used to carry in his pocket a card-case containing cards of the size of visiting-cards, but blank: whenever a thought struck him, when an important reference was made, a valuable authority cited, or some inquiry suggested itself to his mind, or was suggested by others, he wrote a brief memorandum with his pencil on a card, and replaced it in its case. The inscribed cards he slipped through a slit into his desk—'put it into the post-office' was his phrase—that the matter might be taken up afterwards, and pursued by him at leisure. This ingenious advice in aid of memory caught Shelley's fancy, but I am not aware that he ever adopted it; his cards, I fear, would have gone astray, like the prophetic leaves of the Cumæan Sibyl.

Another anecdote of the mode of taking notes by another illustrious personage pleased him still more; on this account, if not for the sake of its intrinsic worth, it is worthy to be repeated and remembered. For in hero-worship, nothing that relates to the object of adoration is trifling to the adorers. Blaise Pascal, to whom Shelley, however different in some respects, bore in others a striking resemblance, was fond of radishes; and he loved to draw them himself fresh from the ground in his sister's garden, as we are gravely assured by an admiring Jansenist: let it be known, then, to posterity that Shelley delighted in honey, and more especially in honeycomb. And so it is in demonworship, demonology, or demonography; a recent biographer informs us that Robespierre was a voracious devourer of oranges. At the carpenter's house, where he boarded, there was always a large dish of oranges for him after dinner, and the empty skins piled upon Maximilian's plate attested, that the miscreant was not less thirsty of orange-juice than of human blood. But to return to the anecdote. Our kind friend, J. F. N., informed us that some old gentleman of his acquaintance, whose name I have forgotten

came over from France in the packet with Rousseau and David Hume. The Scotch philosopher was sick, and kept below, but the citizen of Geneva was quite well and lively, and remained on deck. He was sociable, talkative and inquisitive, and asked many questions. Observing this gentleman writing upon a substance that was new to him, he begged to know what it might be. It was ass's-skin, a substance much used formerly in pocket-books, but now seldom to be seen. The nature of the tablet was explained to him ; how well it received and retained the marks of a black-lead pencil, and how readily the characters were effaced when it was wetted. Rousseau was much surprised at the novelty ; upon which the gentleman presented him with the pocket-book, and it was accepted with great and almost childish eagerness. During the remainder of the voyage, with the infantine simplicity of genius, the most eloquent of philosophers was constantly playing with his new toy ; busily writing upon the ass's-skin, wiping out, and writing again. Nevertheless, it is by no means impossible that the fanciful, capricious, suspicious man soon afterwards might take offence at the gift, imagine that some treachery lurked in it ; that there was a snake in the grass, that the smooth tablet was contrived purposely to betray and ruin him, poisoned by the deceitful David, and thereupon it might be committed to the flames. A subtle poison infused by the envenomed malice of the jealous, insidious Hume into the ass's-skin, gradually ascending up the pencil into the fingers, and proceeding thence along the arm, and finally arriving at the heart, and thereupon instantaneous death, or perhaps a more picturesque wasting, languishing, perishing by slow but inevitable decay : the bare idea of such an incident was charming to Shelley, and every tablet of ass's-skin was a page of romance.

To mention a third remarkable man, and one of the same leaven with the two former, if not of the leaven of the Pharisees—Thomas Paine, whose style his admirers affirm is so correct, so pure, so plain, so distinct, so English, never made any alterations in his writing. There was not a single correction, never one erasure in his MS. His manner of composing, as I have heard persons who had known him relate, was this. He walked backwards and forwards about the room until he had completed a sentence to his satisfaction ; he then wrote it down entire and perfect and never to be amended. When the weather was fair, if there was a garden, a field, a courtyard

at hand, he walked about out of doors for a while, and then came in and put down the sentence which he had arranged mentally, and went out again and walked until he was ready to be delivered of another.

Whenever he came in from a walk, from the streets or the road, he for the most part went immediately to his desk, and set down a finished sentence or two; sometimes a whole paragraph, a just paragraph, that needed no repentance. It appears to me, I confess, that there is nothing wonderful, or admirable, in this. It matters little whether corrections are made in the head or upon paper. A blotted and blurred page is offensive to a man of precise and neat habits; and the author of the *Rights of Man* was very likely such, having been bred a Quaker. Besides, a person believing in immediate inspiration, cannot well tolerate emendations; for whatever has been inspired directly from above cannot need correction, or indeed admit of it. It was probably through the force of early habit that Friend Paine continued to the last to pen his conceptions in faultless, immaculate, unamended writing.

It was in the year 1813 that I first became acquainted with William Godwin. I saw him frequently in the course of that year, and in the year following; and afterwards I met him more or less frequently, according to circumstances. I had expressed a wish to know him, and I was soon invited by a charming family, with whom he was intimate, to dine at their house, where I should find him and Bysshe. I repaired thither, to a somewhat early dinner, in accordance with the habits of the philosopher. I was not on any account to be late, for it was unpleasant to him to dine later than four o'clock.

It was a fine Sunday. I set out betimes, and arrived at the appointed place at half-past three. I found a short, stout, thickset old man, of very fair complexion, and with a bald and very large head, in the drawing-room, alone, where he had been for some time by himself, and he appeared to be rather uneasy at being alone. He made himself known to me as William Godwin; it was thus he styled himself. His dress was dark, and very plain, of an old-fashioned cut, even for an old man. His appearance, indeed, was altogether that of a dissenting minister. He informed me that our hospitable host and his family had been called away suddenly into the country, and that we should not have their company

but that Mr. Shelley was expected every moment. He consulted several times a large old silver watch, and wondered greatly that he had not come; but he would doubtless be with us immediately. He spoke confidently on a subject, which, to say the least, was doubtful. Bysshe, as was not uncommonly the case with him, never came near us. Why he made default, nobody ever knew, least of all did he know himself.

'Had Mr. Shelley mistaken the day, the hour? Did he not know the place; surely he must know it, and know it well?'

I could only say, on behalf of my absent friend, that he often failed to observe his engagements and appointments. It was his habit; a disagreeable and most inconvenient one, certainly. Why and how he had formed it, I could not tell, although I was much interrogated and cross-examined on that head. It had been the way with him ever since I had known him, and it was only too probable that it always would be so. I could not explain, excuse, defend, or justify it; I could merely affirm that so it was.

At four o'clock, I rang the bell, and ordered dinner. To this order there were objections and expostulations.

'We ought, in common civility, to wait awhile. Mr. Shelley could not fail to be with us shortly'.

The objections were overruled, and we two went to dinner; and we two were a multitude, to judge from the number of dishes on the table. Vegetable fare was the rule of the house, and I observed the rule myself; but meat of various kinds had been prepared in various ways for the cannibal guest. He dined carnivorously, but very moderately, paying little attention to the plates of vegetables, which he seemed to condemn, as well as the lore by which they were zealously and learnedly recommended.

William Godwin, according to my observation, always ate meat, and rather sparingly, and little else besides. He drank a glass or two of sherry, wherein I did not join him. Soon after dinner, a large cup of very strong green tea—of gunpowder tea, intensely strong—was brought to him; this he took with evident satisfaction, and it was the only thing that he appeared to enjoy, although our fare was excellent. Having drunken the tea, he set the cup and saucer forcibly upon the table, at a great distance from him, according to the usages of that old school of manners, to which he so plainly belonged. He presently fell into a sound sleep, sitting very forward in his

chair, and leaning forward, so that at times he threatened to fall forward ; but no harm came to him. Not only did the old philosopher sleep soundly, deeply, but he snored loudly.

I got a book, and retiring to the window sat reading for half an hour, or longer, until he awoke. He awoke suddenly, and appeared to be refreshed. 'Had Mr. Shelley arrived?' It was his first thought on waking. He would not take any more wine; he would not walk. It was a lovely evening, but he should have quite enough of walking in coming and in returning. He would go to the drawing-room, and we went up stairs.

Sir William Gell's description of the island of Ithaca had just come out; a handsome quarto volume with engravings; and it lay upon the table. We looked it over together; it was new to both of us, and it interested us greatly. He discoursed much of Ithaca, of Greece, of Ulysses, of Troy, of Homer, and of Chapman's 'Homer': it was manifest that his acquaintance with the poems of Homer was chiefly, if not entirely, derived from Chapman's translation. However, he was quite familiar with the story, the characters, the manners of the *Odyssey*. We spoke nearly all the time we were together of the many extraordinary things, of many things hard to be understood, which are found in that ancient and wonderful poem. The tea-things were brought in. I made tea; I forget whether my companion partook of it. Tea was always most acceptable to me, particularly whilst I was a Pythagorean. Poor dear Pythagoras, with all his wisdom he did not know how to make himself a good cup of tea; or where he might purchase a pound of passable Pekoe, or of satisfactory Souchong. During the whole course of our conversation and operations, my respected associate ever and anon recurred, uneasily and impatiently, to a matter which distressed him sorely—the absence of Mr. Shelley.

Mr. Shelley and William Godwin—such was to be the form of speech: he persisted as pertinaciously in dubbing Bysshe Mister, as in rejecting the title for himself. He questioned me again and again on the subject, and I thought with a certain air of lurking suspicion, as if I knew more than I chose to tell; as if I were privy to the plot, and that there was some deep design in his non-attendance. If he really believed that I was in the confidence of the motives and the secret of his absence, he did me a great injustice.

I ventured to say a few words concerning his famous work on

Political Justice ; but the topic did not appear to be an agreeable one. The author spoke of it slightly and disparagingly, either through modesty and politeness, or because he really had come to consider his theories and speculations on government and morals, crude, unformed, and untenable. Whenever that publication had been mentioned to him in my hearing, he uniformly treated the child of his brain like a step-father. Possibly he felt that his offspring had turned out ill, and had not requited the patience and anxiety that a fond parent had bestowed upon an ingrate. At last he was reluctantly convinced that we should not see the truant. 'Perhaps he was unwell ? Did I believe that Mr. Shelley had been taken ill ?' On the contrary, I firmly believed that he was as well, and as unpunctual, as he had ever been in his life.

William Godwin took leave of me somewhat early, at ten o'clock precisely by the old watch, charging me earnestly and repeatedly to say a great many things to Mr. Shelley, whom most probably I should see first, by way of reprehension, admonition, and well-merited censure for his unwarrantable neglect. I promised to inform the offender of his disappointment and dissatisfaction. I did not know in what direction the grave reprover's homeward course lay, or whether he might desire any more of my society, and therefore I did not offer to accompany him, as I frequently did at our subsequent meetings. The next morning I saw Bysshe. He was delighted to learn that I had met with William Godwin.

'What did he say ? What did we do ? What did I think of him ? How did I like him ?'

He devoured me with greedy questions, and listened to my answers with eager curiosity and enthusiastic pleasure. But when, to keep my promise with the sage, I reported the proceedings of the preceding day, and inquired, in my turn, why he had been nonsuited at our sittings, and had lost his writ of *Nisi Prius*, the rocks are never more deaf to naked, shipwrecked mariners than his locked-up ears were to the interrogatories and reproaches which I faithfully conveyed to him.

In the same comfortable house, which looked upon a plain, at that time green and open with spacious fields, but now fashionable with Belgravia, I soon met William Godwin again. I entered the drawing-room one evening, and found him seated on the sofa ; not alone, as before, but in a circle. He was stoutly maintaining, against several ladies, that hair and moss are the same substance, both growing in the same situa-

tion, and in precisely the same manner. His arguments were not successful ; his paradox was not prosperous ; he entirely failed to convince. I apprehend that the discussion arose out of consideration of vegetable diet, and that he was endeavouring to show, that there is no essential difference between animal and vegetable substances. In society he was usually reserved, shy, and silent ; yet did he always inspire a certain interest. Whatever he said, when he chose to be communicative, was listened to with attention, and was always worth hearing. He appeared to myself and to others to be a perpetual contradiction. He was at once pleasant and unpleasant, agreeable and disagreeable. His conversation was yielded so sparingly that it could never offend by excess, or seem intrusive ; his speech was abrupt and curt, but every remark had its value, and was peculiar and characteristic. His works, the best of them at least, as *Caleb Williams* and *St. Leon*, are read with pleasure and with pain. The mind of the reader is strongly arrested and highly gratified ; and yet he rises from the powerful volume not without a certain uncomfortable feeling ; and the like impressions were produced by personal intercourse with the highly-gifted author. His articulation was indistinct ; his utterance was not easy, but impeded by a sort of effort or catch, sharp and dry. It seemed to be painful to the speaker as well as to the hearer. This it certainly was to a stranger ; but one got accustomed to it by degrees, and then one found in it peculiarity, individuality, and character ; and these qualities would be wanting, if the quality of his voice were less grating and inharmonious.

He was cherished by the kind and amiable family through whose favour I first knew him, and treated with politeness and deference, and his company was courted. Having been put up to it probably at home, he seemed to labour to introduce his family also to their notice ; but in this attempt he was not encouraged.

At our second meeting he was in no hurry to depart ; it was long after the old watch had pointed to ten that he rose to take his leave. The lady of the house informed him that I was going in the same direction, and that I would attend him. As soon as we found ourselves in the street, he put his arm through mine, and we trudged homewards together. He proceeded to the City, to Skinner Street ; I wished him a good-night, or a good-morning, in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. I have frequently walked the same distance with him—a considerable distance,

especially by the side of a short-legged old man, who got over the ground slowly.

Head to head, as the French have it, he was by no means silent, as he was in mixed societies. He was communicative, conversible ; he chatted as he walked with short, tardy steps, but without interruption or intermission. When I reached my lodgings I went instantly to bed to sleep ; for however late the hour of taking rest might be, I never failed to rise punctually at seven. I should have acted a wiser part—I should have discharged the functions of a Boswell better—if I had sat up for half-an-hour, and had committed to paper notes of what I had just heard. But I went to sleep—to forgetfulness ; and therefore my recollections of the Diversions, not of Purley, but of Piccadilly and Long Acre, are now but meagre and scanty.

‘What is your principal line of reading ?’

‘Law’.

This course of study was not approved of. The Caliph, Ebubekr, said, ‘that women are an evil, and that they are a still greater evil because they are a necessary evil’. So my legal studies were disapproved of all the more because they were inevitable.

‘What else do you read besides Law ?’

‘Greek and Latin, French and Italian, the classics and modern languages’.

‘Do you never read English books ?’

‘Yes, sometimes’.

‘Of what kind ?’

‘Voyages and travels, history, and biography’.

‘All of them modern ?’

‘Almost entirely new publications’.

‘Have you read none of our old English writers ?’

‘Very few. Shakespeare ; little besides’.

I was strongly and seriously advised to take the old English authors in hand. Several of them were indicated and recommended. The father of English literature, of English poetry, was especially introduced to my notice, and urged upon me.

‘But I should not understand his language ; his English must be so antiquated, that I could not comprehend it’.

‘By no means ; you will find no difficulty. There are a few antique, obsolete words in his poems, no doubt, but very few ; far fewer than you would suppose ; and there are glossaries to explain these ; you find no difficulty whatever.’

The illustrious poet, whose life and times William Godwin set forth in detail, and in a ponderous quarto, was so constantly and perseveringly pressed upon me, that I promised, as soon as I had leisure, to begin to read his poems ; and ere long I fulfilled my promise.

'Godwin', said Charles Lamb to his friend, 'you have read more books that are not worth reading than any man in England !' There is some truth and much exaggeration in all such sallies of wit. But this is not the place for a disquisition on the old English poets, dramatists, and prose-writers ; it is needless to discuss at length their merits and defects here.

The importance of the treatise on Political Justice has surely been greatly over-rated. The notion that any serious danger was to be apprehended from its influence on the public mind was perfectly preposterous. Utter impracticability is the most striking feature of the work. It is incredible that any one, however weak and timorous, really considered it dangerous and mischievous. It suited the ends of trading alarmists to affect to believe, and to represent, that it was a formidable production ; for during the infectious terror diffused around by the French Revolution the trade in alarm was carried on to a great extent : it was sometimes lucrative, and, moreover, it was very easy, for a man incapable of anything else could at least pretend to be frightened. On the other hand, the merits of the book were much too highly estimated by its admirers. There is little of novelty in it ; it contains nothing so absurd as not to have been said already by some of the philosophers—of the French philosophers. The style and composition are cold, crude, indigested ; it is never so frigid, although always frigid, as when the author desires to be warm ; and it never crawls and creeps so low as when he would rise on high, and seeks to soar. I used sometimes to presume to laugh at it, to turn it to ridicule, to the great annoyance of Shelley, who struggled vehemently to defend the style, as well as to prop up the speculations and sophisms of the halting sage. 'There are more Its in it', I boldly affirmed, 'than in any other book of the same bulk'. I sometimes counted the number in a page, in proof of my assertion. 'It was a mere Iteration', I said ; 'an incessant iteration of the word IT from the beginning to the end'. Yet, with all its many and great defects, it is a work of considerable merit, containing various ingenious problems, speculations, theories, and doubts, well worthy of a

careful perusal, and calm and patient consideration. So also is *The Enquirer*, a subsequent work by the same author, of smaller dimensions, less pretentious, and which attracted less attention and produced less hostility.

This passage from *Political Justice* was at one time in everybody's mouth ; it was illustrative of the completion which the endless perfectibility of the human species would some day receive upon earth. ' It is by no means clear, to make use of a familiar instance, that hereafter a plough may not be turned into a field, and perform its office without the need of superintendence '. ' And that a needle ', it was likewise said, ' might not in like manner be turned loose upon a piece of linen, and it would one day make a shirt of itself '. These expectations, if such they may be called, were quoted in those days as extreme and laughable instances of presumption, credulity, and insanity. Nevertheless, we now read of steam-ploughs, and we may view sewing-machines, by which, to a considerable extent, forebodings once deemed dangerous, impious, and revolutionary, have been realized. The recent triumphs of modern mechanical art, of mind over matter, have thrown ancient ingenuity, even of the highest order, sadly into the shade : let us take one instance. ' In Egypt I saw Cleopatra's Needle ', a young lady returning from her school in England to her home in India, wrote lately to her friends, ' but I thought very little of it, I assure you, after having seen the sewing-machine in London '.

People are used to talk very positively of Shelley's principles, and solemnly to assure the world, which does not care a straw about the matter, that they do not participate or concur in them. I knew Shelley more intimately than any man, but I never could discern in him any more than two fixed principles. The first was a strong, irrepressible love of liberty ; of liberty in the abstract, and somewhat after the pattern of the ancient republics, without reference to the English constitution, respecting which he knew little and cared nothing, heeding it not at all. The second was an equally ardent love of toleration of all opinions, but more especially of religious opinions ; of toleration, complete, entire, universal, unlimited ; and, as a deduction and corollary from which latter principle, he felt an intense abhorrence of persecution of every kind, public or private. He certainly was at all times prone to discuss, to attack, or defend the curious speculations which abound in the writings of William Godwin, and of divers French authors of that age,

but he never seriously and in good earnest adopted their startling and unhealthy paradoxes.

Bysshe's uncle, John Shelley, who was his father's half-brother and was much younger, nearly twenty years younger, than 'old Timotheus', called on him several times. He was a short, dumpy man, of a plain and rather common appearance, and far inferior to his elder brother in stature and vigour. He treated Bysshe with kindness, with marked civility and respect; and he seemed to have the good sense and penetration to perceive, that his family had reason to be proud of a young poet and philosopher of divine promise. He regretted that he was not on better terms with his father, and that the latter was so unreasonable, and he invited his nephew to visit him at Penshurst, who was not inclined to accept the invitation. He disliked his aunt, and complained of her pride and inordinate pretensions, with what foundation I know not; and that she was mean and stingy, except for purposes of ostentation, as in entertaining the French emigrant nobility. In estimating his judgment of his relatives, as well as of other persons, I express in this instance a caution, which is always implied, that considerable allowance ought to be made for a poetic and imaginative temperament. Mr. T. Shelley suffered at times severely from gout. On one occasion he was very seriously indisposed, in considerable danger indeed, from a sharp attack of gout in the stomach. He occupied, during his illness, a small room on the ground-floor at Field Place. Bysshe's sisters told me, that they well remembered seeing their brother several times a day watching and listening at the door of the sick-room, to try to discover how his father was, how he was getting on; he was then about fourteen years of age, and at that time he was exceedingly fond of his father. The poor Eton boy, in his filial solicitude and tender anxiety, standing thus on the watch, is a pleasing and natural picture. Surely it was not well done; it was injudicious, and worse, by a harsh, intemperate, despotical exercise of paternal authority, to alienate a youth of such kindly feelings, and to lose for ever so warm and affectionate a heart. When he was not crossed, Mr. T. Shelley is represented by those who knew him best, to have been a kind man. Acts of kindness towards Tom Medwin have been related to me, and also towards other persons.

It was early in the summer of the year 1813, and, I believe, under the tranquil auspices of the able and mute Quaker

physician, with whom I had a silent interview two or three months previously, that the elder of Harriet's two children came into the world, and nearly two years after her marriage. I have not got the exact date of this important event. I have read in some periodical that it took place at Cooke's Hotel, in Dover Street ; this I think is a mistake. They removed from Half Moon Street to a small house in a quiet back street in Pimlico, of which I have forgotten the name. I called there pretty frequently, taking it in my way, to inquire after the mother and daughter, and I always received a favourable report of their well being. All the matrons, prophetesses, predicted that as the good Harriet got over it so quickly and so well, she must be a strong little woman, and would certainly live a long time, and have a very large family. The first time I called there, was so soon after the birth of the child, that it is hardly possible to suppose that she could have been removed thither from Dover Street. The situation had been chosen in order to be near a very agreeable lady, to whom Bysshe was warmly attached, and who had lodgings a few doors off in the same retired street.

I never set foot in the house ; my visits did not extend beyond the door. They did not remain there long—not above a month, I think. The little girl was named Ianthe Eliza. She received the latter name, doubtless, in honour of the guardian angel, who still continued to officiate, occasionally at least, in that capacity. Ianthe, violet flower, or violet, is a name of Greek origin, fetched immediately from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, being the name of a girl, to possess whom another girl, Iphis, was transformed into a youth :

potiturque suâ puer Iphis Ianthe.

The fable is pleasing, and the name pretty ; yet as the young father had so many good old names amongst the ladies of his own family, it is a pity that he did not prefer one of them to so fantastical an appellation. The Yankee Cockney practice of bestowing flowers of fancy names has a vulgarity, affectation, and pretension about it, and was unworthy of him. It was better adapted for the issue of a metropolitan rhymster than for a gentleman's daughter. This accession to his family did not appear to afford him any gratification, or to create an interest. He never spoke of his child to me, and to this hour I never set eyes on her. This I regret, as I believe she is a most estimable person, and in every respect worthy of her

parents, and, moreover, suitably married ; Ianthe the second having found a second Iphis, it is presumed, without any transformation. I often asked Harriet to let me see her little girl, but she always made some excuse. She was asleep, being dressed, or had gone out, or was unwell. The child had some blemish, though not a considerable one, in one of her eyes ; and this, I believe, was the true and only reason why her mother did not choose to exhibit her. She could not bear, herself a beauty, that I should know, such was her weakness, that one so nearly connected with herself was not perfectly beautiful.

Although I did not visit the young cock bird in his breeding-cage during the few weeks he inhabited it, I sometimes met him at the house of our common friends, and several times in particular at the adjacent lodgings of the lady friend, for whose sake he had emigrated to Pimlico. She was an amiable and accomplished old lady, and tolerably agreeable, but too much of the French school to be quite so, and the greater part of her associates were odious. I generally found there two or three sentimental young butchers, an eminently philosophical tinker, and several very unsophisticated medical practitioners, or medical students, all of low origin, and vulgar and offensive manners. They sighed, turned up their eyes, retailed philosophy, such as it was, and swore by William Godwin and *Political Justice* ; acting, moreover, and very clumsily, the parts of Petrarchs, Warters, St. Leons, and Fleetwoods. This strange selection was made, this queer medley was brought together, partly from a certain French love of presiding over, ruling, forming, and managing, and it was imagined—a great mistake—that low people would prove the most tractable and submissive ; and partly through the love of equality, of levelling, and fraternizing.

I bore with the rabble rout for a little while, on account of my friend, and because I could there enjoy his precious society ; and they had made him believe that their higgledy-piggledy ways were very right and fine, and conducive to progress and perfectibility. However, a young English gentleman, of a liberal education, an Etonian and Oxonian, soon grew weary of persons so ill-suited to his aristocratical feelings and habits, and began to train off.

The last pilgrimage I made to the abode of perfect republican equality, I met Bysshe near the door, towards which he was advancing with mighty strides and his wonted rapidity. I seized his arm, and said, ' Come along ; let us take a walk to-

gether ; let us leave the sentimentalists to ripen for the gallows by themselves !'

He laughed so long and so loud at a sally that strongly arrested his sympathies, and I joined him so heartily in the mirthful and contemptuous explosion, that several of the good people of the quiet street opened their windows, and looked out to discover the cause of the unusual disturbance. Whilst he was hesitating, I still kept hold of his arm, and finally I carried him off as lawful prize. We had a long walk to the westward, through fields, and afterwards we enjoyed a cup of strong tea, or rather, to tell the whole truth, many cups, in a still coffee-room, at Kensington.

'How I wish I could be as fastidious and exclusive as you are', he sighed forth, as we walked ; 'but I cannot——'

A good-humoured, paternal old waiter brought the kettle to our table so often, which he always kindly assured us was 'byling'—and the kettle fully confirmed his assurance,—that he was provoked to remark : 'You like your tea, gentlemen, I think !'

We finished our tea at last, but not until we had sworn in our cups to cut the unprejudiced, levelling confraternity.

From the quiet street in Pimlico they retired to Bracknell, a still quieter place, where Shelley took a small house with the attractive title, 'High Elms,' with his ordinary purpose of remaining in it for ever. I did not visit him, because I was about to proceed to the North, to spend the long vacation there, as usual, before he was well settled in his pleasant retirement.

HIGH ELMS, BRACKNELL, *July 27, 1813.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I was disappointed at being unable to call on you on Sunday morning. My presence was required at home, but as I shall be in town in a few days, I expect still to have the pleasure of seeing you before your journey to the North.

Tell me when you depart from London. I am anxious to see you, or if I cannot, to write to you at greater length. It is far most probable that we shall remain here until the Spring.

I know you will be happy even to receive these few lines, and therefore I do not wait until to-morrow, when I should write a longer letter.

Your very affectionate Friend,
PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ONE evening, at the commencement of August, I took my seat on the box, or top, of the Edinburgh mail, and in due course, by a progress which in those days we were so unenlightened as to consider rapid, I reached my destination. That amount of vacation which I annually gave to myself, I fully and freely imparted to my law-books ; pleading and pleaders, with all their counts, common and uncommon, and pleas, general and special, I left behind me with my books in London, to keep holiday also, or to do worse. I usually devoted my vacation to a careful study of the Greek classics, but this autumn I had to redeem two pledges. I had undertaken, at the suggestion of a lady, to read *Sir Charles Grandison*, and promised William Godwin to take Geoffrey Chaucer in hand. The day after my arrival I borrowed *Grandison* of my aunt, my father's sister, who lent me the numerous, well-thumbed volumes joyfully ; observing, that it was a good sign in a young person to desire to read that excellent work. The same morning I took down from its shelf in my father's library, a fine old edition in folio and black-letter, a volume which I had never opened before of Chaucer's Works. I found the proceedings of the most exemplary, faultless personages in Richardson's famous novel extremely tiresome, and I passed over the early portion of the long-winded narrative too rapidly for edification ; but my attention was powerfully arrested, riveted, by the Lady Clementina and her family. I experienced little difficulty with Chaucer, less even than the assurances of my adviser had led me to expect. The *Canterbury Tales* delighted me ; so much, indeed, that I read them a second time some five or six years afterwards, in Tyrwhitt's edition, on the summer circuit. The other poems of Chaucer contain many striking passages of infinite poetical merit, but on the whole they proved tedious ; yet I persevered, and steadily read the *Romance of the Rose*, and so on, quite to the end of the big book. I looked into sundry old English writers subsequently, at different times, through the like suggestions. It really seemed to me that these good people were dead, quite dead, fairly dead ; they had died a natural death, and it was vain to try to resuscitate them.

That spirited publisher, William Caxton, selected the productions of his unrivalled press with great judgment, no doubt.

and in accordance with the taste of the fifteenth century, but not by any means of the nineteenth. Jane Shore probably found them agreeable reading, I did not: to dispute concerning tastes is a vain thing. If the lovely Jane had repaired to Skinner Street with one of Caxton's new volumes, wet from the press, under her arm, and had read it aloud to William Godwin, as the lovely Harriet was accustomed to read aloud to me, the venerable sage, in sooth, would have thought it most amusing, and truly delightful.

I did not receive any letters from Bysshe, or any account of his proceedings, from himself or Harriet, during the period of nearly three months, which I passed in the North. I heard afterwards that he spent some weeks agreeably at High Elms; but he did not remain there for ever, or even until the Spring, by reason of his own inherent restlessness and the pernicious action of disturbing forces. He had a long visit from an amiable and interesting family, to whom he was warmly attached, and who doated upon him. They came to him in a body—father, mother, and five fine children. His visitors were devoted, heart and soul, to the return to Nature and to vegetable diet, which we may readily believe was faithfully observed whilst his orthodox friends were under his hospitable roof. He had also two or three neighbours, in whose superior society he found pleasure and amusement.

The cheerful village, where the wanderer had pitched his tent, was within a pleasant walk of London, according to our estimation of distance in those youthful days, and with our habits and practice of walking. There was every motive to induce him to remain content and comfortable in his present position, and none whatever for changing it. I also followed exactly the canonical observances of the vegetable church of Nature; and I found them far from disagreeable in the country, and during the summer and autumn. I did not stumble upon anybody who was disposed to follow my example, however excellent or edifying it might seem. It is true that I did not seek to proselytize, or desire to attract followers or make converts. Nevertheless, nobody objected. I represented my singular fare merely as a whim—a fancy; such, in truth it was, and I was freely permitted to follow my fancy.

I sought exercise and amusement in shooting, and I devoted much time to that diversion, as I did for several years. I shot, during this season, game which I was not to eat. My way of gaining an appetite was in direct opposition to my

mode of satisfying it. A striking incongruity—a patent contradiction; and such my existence—at once blood-thirsty and bloodless—would certainly have been, if I had taken up my line of feeding on the principles of Pythagoras, or of the Brahmins, or perhaps upon any principles whatever. But I was commonly contented to leave their fine, fixed principles to wiser heads than my own; to slay or to scare partridges from sunrise to sunset, for three or four days in every week; and to return home at dusk and refresh and restore myself, first, with vegetables and fruit, and finally with copious potations of tea.

On the intervening days of rest I read Chaucer's ponderous, black-letter tome. It occupied much of my time, yet I did not altogether neglect the Greek Classics. On the contrary, I found leisure to read carefully, and with unspeakable delight, nine of the eleven comedies of Aristophanes; the other two plays I had read before. For that purpose I borrowed a nice, readable edition in octavo of a friend, who had devoted himself exclusively to Greek literature. The painfully minute characters of my little pocket Aristophanes were too trying even for eyes that had then seen only twenty-one years and a few months.

I have sometimes compared the calm, stationary, I may almost say retrograde, life of the owner of the octavo edition of the one inestimable sample of the old comedy that alone remains to us, with the troubled, restless, innovating career of the roving occupant of High Elms. I am now attempting to delineate the eccentric orbit of the latter luminary; let the former describe for himself his steady revolution during a triennial period round a single centre and sun of Grecian learning. The marked diversity in the motions of two distinguished scholars will be curious, amusing, and possibly not without instruction.

The very obliging lender of Brunck's Aristophanes was formerly a member, not without distinction, of a college of high repute in Oxford.

'I rise early; I always did; and I take one mouthful of air before breakfast—no more. I begin to read immediately after breakfast, that I may get a walk and appetite before dinner, which is essential.'

He spoke modestly of his dinner, but we will hope that he invariably made such a meal, as, in a wealthy establishment, a clerk in holy orders ought to make.



'I have my tea pretty soon after dinner ; it freshens me up. I cannot read again until I have had my tea. When I have finished my book, in the summer—in the winter it would be ridiculous—I take a turn round the garden, when I am at home ; when I am by the sea-side, on the sands close to the sea. I am not much of a supper-man ; I never was ; but I love just to play with a crab before going to bed ; or with something of the kind, and to swallow a spoonful or two of warm negus.

'I read nothing but Greek. I have a three-years' course of Greek authors, which I go over every three years'.

He promised to give me a list of the authors, with dates showing the time which he gave to each. I reproach myself for letting the opportunity slip ; for never having procured what I might then have obtained at any time.

'I read a few pages of Virgil and of Cicero two or three times in the year, just to satisfy myself that although they are very clever, very good in their way certainly, they are not to be compared with the Greek writers, but are immeasurably inferior in all respects ; that it is a waste of time for a man who can read Greek to read their writings.

'On Sunday it is different. I do not read the classical authors ; it would not be proper. I look over the newspaper very lightly ; once a-week is enough. I read the Septuagint, the New Testament, and perhaps a homily or two of Chrysostom ; in the original, of course.

'A newspaper once a-week, and very little of it, is sufficient surely. I will not say absolutely, that since the age of Pericles nothing has happened in the world, that a man of sense ought to care about. But since the publication of the last Greek author of acknowledged merit—I will not say the last classic, for I would not be illiberal or too restrictive—there has been no event that we need trouble ourselves much about. Of course, I except our blessed religion—that is a thing quite apart ; I say nothing about that now ; I speak only of profane matters—of secular affairs. When two or three scholars get together, we talk, you know, like heathens.

'Homer is an exception to my three-years' course—the only one. I read him every year.

'I reside in a country town ; and I go every year to the sea-side in the summer, during the long days, for a month. I read a book of the *Iliad* every day before dinner, and a book of the *Odyssey* daily after dinner. In a month there

are twenty-four week-days ; there being twenty-four books in each poem, it just does it.

'The sea-side is the proper place to read Homer ; he speaks so much of the sea. I throw in the *Hymns*—there are commonly two or three rainy days in the four weeks, when I cannot take a walk ; so I always contrive to throw in the *Hymns* and the *Frogs and Mice*.

'I always use the *Oxford Homer*, as it is called. The Greek text, in four volumes octavo ; without the Latin interpretation, but with the Greek scholia of Didymus, or whoever he was. I make use of common editions,' he showed me several of them, 'without many notes ; for if I had to read many notes I should never get through. I use no other lexicon than *Scapula* ; I find it quite sufficient'.

He produced a folio edition of *Scapula*, in which by long use he had worn a hole that would have contained a pair of stockings. He continued his triennial course of reading without interruption for thirty years, and consequently read Homer through thirty times ; the other Greek classics ten times.

'I have looked into the translations of Homer ; they are very poor affairs. I have heard much of a German translation, by Voss, but I do not understand German ; I am quite content with the original. I have looked into Cowper's : I like his translation of Homer as little as I like his religion ! I never published anything ; I never wrote a line for publication. I have always been most unwilling to increase the sum of human errors : it is large enough already, to say the least'.

To have written a good book on the Tranquillity of Life, as the Scotchman, Volusenus Wilson, did, is something, but it is far more to have actually and so admirably practised it. I repeat my regret that I did not get from him his Itinerary of three years' journey and progress through the principal Greek authors ; it would have been a literary curiosity, and interesting to many students, as the regular orbit of an ordinary mind, although of a very high order, to whom the erratic course of a transcendent genius—of a comet that blazes across the zenith once in a century, would be perplexing and incomprehensible.

This excellent scholar and clergyman had no family ; his clerical duties were none, or trifling ; he was not a man to neglect any duty, of superior, or inferior, obligation ; and

he had a competent, a moderate income derived from private sources, and independent of ecclesiastical stipends and benefices.

CHESTER STREET, Oct. 21, 1813.

AFTER allowing your elegant and friendly letter to remain so long unanswered, you will perhaps suspect that I am incapable of making a due estimate of its merits; but the truth is, I am a reluctant writer, unless stimulated to the use of my pen by painful emotions. This peculiarity of my nature will, I trust, at least acquit me of not receiving pleasure from your ready compliance with my request; for I do not forget that Clementina's woes were introduced to your acquaintance at my suggestion, and that I likewise urged you to favour me with your opinion of this celebrated composition, of which the episode is incomparably the most interesting part.

In your estimate of the character of Grandison, you must keep in view that Richardson designed to paint a perfect *civilized* being, whose passions are always obedient to his reason. She never for one moment quits the helm—a disgusting object enough, I will confess, contrasted with the wild and beautiful starts of passion so conspicuous in his fair mistress. But the fidelity and consistency with which his hero is delineated and supported throughout the work, proves, indeed, what has never been denied to Richardson—the true character of genius.

In reading this voluminous novel, we never confound one object with another, and the images remain indelibly impressed on the mind. This, at least, was the judgment I formed of it years ago, for it is long since I wept over the artificial woes of Clementina, whose madness is the most touching picture of the kind, I believe, in the literature of any country. We have, indeed, the authority of an excellent scholar on this subject, Dr. Warton, who concludes his encomium on this masterly performance by saying that he questions whether it would not be pedantry to prefer the madness of Orestes to Clementina's, or whether even Lear's has so many strokes of genuine passion. The author, who does not yield the palm to Euripides, or Shakespeare, has surely the strongest claim to our admiration and respect.

From this subject I turn to one, I am persuaded, not less interesting to you: your friends, the Shelleys, who were all well when we parted. Since their arrival in the North, where, I imagine, necessity will fix them for some time, we have had

no tidings of them. The lady, whose welfare must be so important in your estimation, was, as usual, very blooming and very happy, during the whole of our residence at Bracknell: Ianthe grown surprisingly, and Miss Westbrook ever smiling and serene. They have made an addition to their party, in the person of a cold scholar, who, I think, has neither taste nor feeling. This Shelley will perceive, sooner or later; for his warm nature craves sympathy, and I am convinced he will not meet with it in his new acquaintance.

My sister, who would be flattered by your inquiries, if she knew of them, was quite well a fortnight since. We all look with pleasure to your return; not omitting Mr. Lawrence, who always speaks of you as you deserve.

That the temper and habits of your associates do not meet all your wishes, is far from surprising me. I never yet found in the country of this distinguished isle enlightened and agreeable persons of either sex; they are too scattered for one to light upon them by accident. Even the capital is not too rich in unprejudiced thinkers; and upon those, society, with its frauds, lays so firm a claw, that half their merit is of necessity cast into the shade.

I read the first part of an early work of yours, and see it was the production of a very young man, some portions of which your mature judgment will not confirm. When we meet I will venture to discuss with you its beauties and defects.

Mr. N. has already acquitted himself of his agreeable debt to you, and, having of course talked of his health, it only remains for me to speak of the other members of my family, who would be pleased by your inquiries, if they were old enough to estimate the value of them. Octavia and Camilla, I think, you will find improved; my elder son progressing towards scholarship, and the younger boy fast into breeches; and Coraly light and nimble as a fairy.

I hope you will eat your Christmas dinner with us, whether you continue one of the holy or not, for no change of habits of such a nature can alter the esteem with which I subscribe myself

Your very sincere friend,

To T. J. H., NORTON.

CORNELIA N.

It was from my fair correspondent that I first learnt that my young friends had taken themselves off to Edinburgh.



I ignorantly supposed that Bysshe was living happily in his peaceful abode in Berkshire, and I wondered, so far as I could ever wonder at any of his proceedings, at his protracted silence, and vainly speculated on the possible causes of it. No doubt I addressed at least one letter to Bracknell, to be read only by the winds that played in the tops of the High Elms. I confess I was surprised at the unexpected intelligence of his sudden and absurd flight, of his second and causeless visit to the metropolis of Scotland; where, of course, he would remain for ever, as usual; or, it was imagined at least, that necessity would fix them there for some time. It was falsely pretended that necessity had driven them thither. The journey was performed, I believe, in that carriage for the price of which I had been arrested in the spring. As a measure of rigid economy and a matter of strict necessity, they had posted four hundred miles at an enormous expense. I marvelled at the rash and extravagant delusion, and was curious to discover by what evil counsellor it had been put into their heads, but I could never find it out.

At the end of October, and soon after the receipt of the charming letter which brought to me the unwelcome tidings of this overt act of folly, I returned to London. I resumed my professional duties and legal education in the Temple. I consecrated my evenings, whenever I was at liberty, and my Sundays invariably, to the delightful society of my amiable, accomplished, and intellectual friends. Nobody could give me any news of the fugitive, whose absence from our circles was deeply deplored; and the ruthless marauders were bitterly execrated who had cruelly despoiled us of our beloved companion, and choicest and most exquisite ornament. I was constantly reminded of the choice of Hercules; of that fable, or apologue, in which the half-god is placed between Virtue and Vice, who contend for the possession of him. Thus was it with our three-quarter god; there was always a contest for him, between forward, spunging vulgarity, that would live out of him, on the one hand—and on the other, the modest, fostering elegance, that cherished him, and would cheerfully have maintained him, had it been needful. Unfortunately, and by reason of the fourth part of mortality's frailty, that clogged and weighed down his otherwise divine nature, the poor fellow, unlike Hebe's husband, did not on every occasion make the more eligible selection. Our uneasy speculations were at last terminated by a letter, which came

to hand one calendar month, after my return. Here it is; may it be as acceptable to every reader as it was to us!

EDINBURGH, Nov. 26, 1813.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have written to you several times since I received your letter at Bracknell. My letters were directed to you at Stop-ton in Durham, but I suppose that you had nothing particular to communicate in return—as, indeed, their contents were not of extraordinary importance.

I am happy to hear that you have returned to London, as I shall shortly have the pleasure of seeing you again. I shall return to London alone. My evenings will often be spent at the N.'s, where, I presume, you are no unfrequent visitor.

Your novel is now printed. I need not assure you with what pleasure this extraordinary and animated tale is perused by me. Every one to whom I have shown it agrees with me in admitting, that it bears indisputable marks of a singular and original genius. Write more like this. Delight us again with a character so natural and energetic as Alexy—vary again the scene with an uncommon combination of the most natural and simple circumstances: but do not persevere in writing after you grow weary of your toil; ‘*aliquando bonus dormitat Homerus*’; and the swans and the Eleutherarchs are proofs that you were a little sleepy.

I have for some time given myself to study. I have read *Tacitus*, many of Cicero's philosophical works (who is, in my estimation, one of the most admirable characters the world ever produced), and Homer's *Odyssey*. I am now studying Laplace, *Système du Monde*, and am determined not to relax until I have attained considerable proficiency in the physical sciences.

I have examined Hume's reasonings with respect to the non-existence of external things, and, I confess, they appear to me to follow from the doctrines of Locke. What am I to think of a philosophy which conducts to such a conclusion? —*Sed hæc hactenus.*

A new acquaintance is on a visit with us this winter. He is a very mild, agreeable man, and a good scholar. His enthusiasm is not very ardent, nor his views very comprehensive: but he is neither superstitious, ill-tempered, dogmatical, or proud.

I have translated the two Essays of Plutarch, *περὶ σωφρο-*

payías, which we read together. They are very excellent. I intend to comment upon them, and to reason in my preface concerning the Orphic and Pythagoric system of diet. Adieu ! Believe me to be ever sincerely attached to you. My dear friend,

I am yours affectionately,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H.

When will the Dead Letter Office give up her dead ? At that joyful resurrection of lost, departed thoughts we may read not only the several letters so strangely misdirected to me at Stopton in Durham, but many other of my friend's precious communications, which, on other occasions, unfortunately miscarried. We see, however, from this single letter, the small remnant that was saved, how true he had been to his nature—an ardent, sedulous, enthusiastic student. We perceive also that, with the like truth, he was in as great a hurry to quit Edinburgh as he had ever been to reach it. He was desirous to quit it by himself ; to swim to the shore alone, to get speedily out of that ocean of delights into which he had inconsiderately plunged. This he was not permitted to do.

Not very long after the receipt of his letter, but how long I do not remember, he came back to London—not a solitary, as he had proposed, and free, but in custody. He entered, most unexpectedly, one of our evening circles, together with some of his associates, and with an abruptness on the part of the latter that was not altogether relished. Upon the like principles of philosophical frugality the return to London had also been performed by post. On their way to or from Scotland, I think, the party had made some deviation into the Lake district. I never heard the details of his second northern progress. Bysshe never spoke to me on the subject ; he seemed to have no pleasure in the retrospect. He looked forward with fervid eagerness, and seldom did he review the past with satisfaction. I must except his sojourn at Oxford ; to this he always recurred with mingled feelings of pleasure and regret : there only did I ever see him completely at home. Time wears on, passing by with an equal foot, whether we sit still in an easy-chair in our study, conning over the Greek Classics in a mazy round, thrumming and thumbing Scapula, and travelling only to the end, wind and weather permitting, of the broad gravel-walk in the vicarage garden ; or whether,

flying off at a tangent, we dash away on the instant to the farthest corners and most hidden nooks of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, in order that we may rush wildly back again, posting up to London in utter destitution and with four horses.

The year 1814 had come upon us. In that year—and at the beginning of the year, I think—Shelley published a work entitled, *A Refutation of Deism: in a Dialogue*. It is handsomely, expensively, and very incorrectly printed, in octavo. It was published in a legal sense, unquestionably; whether it was also published in a publisher's sense, and offered for sale, I know not, but I rather think, that it was: the preface informs us that it was intended it should be. I never heard that anybody bought a copy; the only copy I ever saw is that which my friend kindly sent to me: it is inscribed by his own hand on the title-page: 'To his friend, T. Jefferson Hogg, from P. B. S.' I never heard it mentioned any farther than this, that two or three of the author's friends told me, that it had been sent as a present. It is a short dialogue, comprised in 101 pages of large print. Eusebes and Theosophus discourse together, and dispute with each other, much as the author himself loved to dispute, when he could find an opponent; whenever Eusebes could find a Theosophus and get up an antagonistic dialogue. It is written in his powerful, energetic, contentious style, but it contains nothing new or important, and was composed and printed also, in a hurry. He never spoke of it to me, or in my presence. It attracted no attention; and doubtless Shelley himself soon discovered that it did not merit it. The subject of vegetable diet is brought in, dragged in, and in a crude, undigested form. The whole matter is disposed of briefly, triumphantly, and dogmatically, in a single paragraph, in these words:

'It is the necessary consequence of the organization of man that his stomach should digest his food. It inevitably results also from his gluttonous and unnatural appetite for the flesh of animals, that his frame be diseased, and his vigour impaired. But in neither of these cases is adaptation of means to end to be perceived. Unnatural diet, and the habits consequent upon its use, are the means, and every complication of frightful disease is the end. But to assert that these means were adapted to this end by the Creator of the world, or that human caprice can avail to traverse the precautions of omnipotence, is absurd. These are the consequences of the properties of organized matter, and it is a strange perversion of the understanding, to

argue that a certain sheep was created to be devoured by a certain individual of the human species, when the conformation of the latter, as is manifest to the most superficial student of comparative anatomy, classes him with those animals who feed on fruit and vegetables'.

A long quotation is given in a note from Plutarch's treatise on eating flesh. It is in the original Greek, without any translation either in English or in Latin; a convincing proof that the dialogue was not addressed to unlearned readers. Plutarch shows very clearly that the internal structure of a human being is not suited to digest raw flesh, nor is the outward form of man so constructed that he can conveniently seize upon, and worry, and devour a stag, or a bullock, or even a kid, or a lamb, after the manner of a lion, a bear, or a wolf. This is perfectly true, but this is not the question. It would take a good many Plutarchs and Porphyrys to prove, even with the powerful aid of Joe Ritson and Dr. Lambe, that man may not add a little cooked meat to his vegetables. A squire first catches his hare by his greyhound; secondly, he dresses it by his cook; and, thirdly, he eats it with a mealy potato and a slice of bread, by the assistance of a friend; and, fourthly and lastly, he digests it at his ease, in the same good company, pouring a glass or two of good old port wine upon it.

This comfortable mode of living, say the philosophers, being universally adopted by the gentry and clergy throughout merry England, is the fruitful parent of physical and moral suffering. It is the cause that a flea-bitten Scotchman has the itch; that a dog has the mange; and that an Irish hodman, having taken too much whiskey overnight, at waking his mother, and falling from a ladder, pitching upon his head, and fracturing his skull, dies upon the spot. You cannot cut down a fir tree with your teeth, and saw it into lengths with your nails. Therefore, says Plutarch, in spite of your axes and saws, you shall have no planks, no inch deals!

Whether the immortal Goethe could have produced the poems of the Divine Shelley, I will not presume to decide, or even to inquire; but I will assert confidently that Shelley could not have written Goethe's novels. Whilst he was still a boy—a boy of magnificent promise—he threw off hastily two extravagant romances, and published them as hastily. He never brought forth another novel, but he was often nibbling at one: he had commonly some tale on the anvil. He used to transmit choice passages to me, an ill-natured Aristarchus, a

very Zöilus ; for he said that I discouraged him. I am in part, not wholly, guilty. I encouraged and exhorted him to proceed, but to proceed, for the most part, in a more sober, subdued tone ; to give a little repose and respite to the nerves, spirits, and feelings of the harassed reader. A raging sea, an eruption, an earthquake, a whirlwind, must not last for ever ; not even for a long time. He was fascinated by *The Sorrows of Werter*, who has not been ? and he was of opinion that a continuation, or rather an enlargement and amplification of the narrative, was demanded. Albert certainly ought to have made a splash ; on the contrary, he exhibited a culpable indifference, in taking things coolly, like an honest German as he was. His wife was dear to him, no doubt, and with abundant reason ; but so also were his sausage with cabbage, his Rhenish wine, his Bavarian beer, and especially his pipe. If therefore, by an undue sensibility to the young ladies' vagaries, he had brought on an indigestion, or broken in upon the hours sacred to his tranquil enjoyments, he would have disturbed that balance and equipoise of soul which constitute the perfection of reason.

I appended my impertinent remarks, and sent the papers back, as he desired. They were destroyed, or lost. However, I found one morsel, it appears, to relate to the amplification of Werter ; and the worthy Albert is supposed to be doing the right sort of thing, in the right way. I had omitted to return it. Would that I had been as negligent on other occasions ! It is in Shelley's hand-writing : it has never been published, and the subject is familiar and popular.

CHAPTER XXIX

FRAGMENT OF A NOVEL

You deceive yourself terribly, my friend ; it is another source of proof to me that you should have written to Charlotte, as you have.

It convinces me at the same time of your real sincerity, great, self-deceptive, continued vehemence of passion, which borrows respect, deference from distance. It convinces me more forcibly than ever how unfit it is that you should live near us ; it convinces me that I, by permitting it, should act

a subservient part in the promotion of yours and Charlotte's misery. I am more and more convinced, that from a connection such as this, even intellectual, nothing but misery can arise: your passions impose upon your reason, if this is not evident to your apprehension. I either actually do, or merely affect to put self out of the question; this we will not discuss; if similar effects follow, the consideration of causes must be useless labour. You say you fear that you have lost my good opinion. 'Good opinion' is very comprehensive, certainly. I no longer estimate your powers of resisting passion so highly as once I did. Certainly, I no longer consider your reason as superior to the sophistry of feeling, as once it was. How can I? to what have you yielded? How terrible, how complete has been the perversion of that reason I once almost fancied omnipotent. I admit the distinction which you make between mistake and crime. I heartily acquit you of the latter. Yet how great has been your mistake; even now does it continue. You never could think it *virtue* to act as you desired. You might, indeed, have been so far imposed upon by feeling as to imagine that virtue did not forbid it. I said I thought you were insincere—true. I do not wonder that you shudder at the accusation. It appears to me perfectly natural that you should at the same time be disguising, veiling, palliating; you should think yourself the pattern of disinterestedness, which once you were, which once I hope again to behold you. I said you were insincere. I said so because I thought so. I still think so; but you are imposed upon by feeling the contamination of falsehood is far, far from you. One expression in your long letter, your last letter, convinces me that you are still enthralled by feeling. It is merely an instance. 'I must, I will convince you, etc. I must,—or, the alternative is terrible but decided. You shall believe, etc., or, when *too late*, you shall feel'. This gives me pain. This proves to me that, so far from being now under the guidance of reason, you wish to enforce my belief in you by an act, which itself is inadequate to the excitement of any belief, but that of *your* selfishness, or to *revenge* my want of it by this very act, which you know would embitter my existence. Else what means 'you shall feel when too late?'

This, my friend, is not convincing. It might be enough (supposing I thought you remained in the state of mind which dictated that) to make me say, I believe in you, but not to *make* me believe in you. What will then make me again believe

you to be what you were ? Simply to resume that character which once gained the credence, the loss of which you complain of. Think, reason, methodize. Your present incapacity for all these ; my conviction that your exposure to Charlotte's attractions would augment that incapacity, are the limits of the change of my opinion regarding you. It appears to me that I am acting as your friend—your disinterested friend—by objecting to your living near us at present. Certainly, I am depriving myself of the very great pleasure of your society : this, however, is necessary ; to this I submit.

You hint in your letter to Charlotte your obligation to *me* for introducing you to her. Certainly, if I deserve any disservice at your hands, it is for unwittingly exposing you to the temptation and consequent misery of this very intercourse. Here, again, I see that feeling peeping out which would destroy our hopes again. Think not that I am otherwise than your friend ; a friend to you, now more fervent, more devoted than ever, for misery endears to us those whom we love. You are, you shall be my bosom friend. You have been so but in one instance, and there you have deceived yourself. Still, let us continue what we have ever been. I will remain unchanged, so *shall* you *hereafter*. Let us forget this affair ; let us erase from the memory that ever it had being. Consider what havoc one year, the last year of our lives, has made in memory. How can you say, then, that good will not come ; that we shall not again be what we were ! Good and evil are in an ever-varying routine of change. If I am wretched this month, the arising of another may see me happy.

You will say, perhaps, that it is well for *me* to reason ; I am cold, phlegmatic, unfeeling, that I compromise for those sins which I love, by railing against those, which are matters of indifference. In the first part of this charge there may be some truth, I have more than once felt the force of this. Is constitutional temperament the criterion of morality ? Believe me, that this more than excuses to me the present irrationality, incongruity, and inconsistency of your words and actions ; I cannot avoid, however, seeing, that they are incongruous, nor seeing it, avoid earnestly desiring, that they may be otherwise.

Prove to me satisfactorily, that virtue exists not, that it is a fabric as baseless as a schoolboy's vision—then take life, I will no more with it. I would not consent to live, to breathe, to

vegetate, if this vegetation simply went on to imbibe for no other end, than its own proper nutriment the juices, which surrounded it. Does the vegetable reason on the good it does to the air, when it absorbs azote ? does the panther destroy the antelope for the public good ? does the lion love the lioness for his sake or her own ? Prove, that *man* too is necessarily this ; my last act may be an act of this very selfishness, but it would be an act precluding the possibility of more of it, and I would leave the world to such, as could bear to inhabit its surface. Prove this, and I will say you have acted wisely. The argument concerning morality mentioned in your last letter was intended for this. But though I think you insincere (though without being conscious of it), I do not think that this is your opinion now ; yet, stay, what did I remark in your letter to Charlotte ? It proves, at the same time, the sincerity, undisguisedness of your passion. Yet the insincerity, which I have remarked as secretly betraying you.

Your talk of female excellence, female perfection. *Man* is in your declamation a being infinitely inferior, whose proudest efforts at virtue are but mockeries of his impotence. Charlotte is the personification of all this contrast to *man*, the impassionateness of the most ardent passion, that ever burned in human breast could never have dictated a compliment (I will not say, a piece of flattery) more excessive. She perceived it (for she has shown me your letter), and remarked with much indignation on the repetition of that continued flattery, which you had made your theme ever since she knew you. I wish you would investigate the sources of this passion, my dear friend ; you would find it derived its principal source from sensation.

Let your 'too, too great susceptibility of beauty', your very own sincere expression in your letter to Charlotte suffice to convince you of the true state of your feelings. This caused your error primarily : nor can I wonder. I do not condemn, I pity ; nor do I pity with contempt, but with sympathy, real sympathy. I hope I have shown you that I do not regard you as a *smooth-tongued traitor* ; could I choose such for a friend ; could I still love him with affection unabated, perhaps increased ? Reason, plain reason, would tell you this could not be. How far gone must you have been in sophistry, self-deception, to think sensation in this, in any instance laudable.

I am not happy. I tell you so. My last letter was written

in the acuteness of feeling ; but do you wish that I should be happy ? Reassure yourself, and then be assured, that not a wish of my heart will remain ungratified, as respects you. I have but *one* other wish beside ; to that, at present, I will not allude more. Charlotte will write to you to-morrow. May I require, that, as one proof of self-conquest, you will throw the letter into the fire, suppressing all thoughts of *adoration*, which I strongly suspect to arise from mere sensation, sentiment. But the letter will arrive first : it will be pressed to the lips, folded to the heart, imagination will dwell upon the hand, that wrote it ; how easy the transition to the wildest reveries of ungratified desire !

Oh ! how the sophistry of the passions has changed you ! The sport of a woman's whim, the plaything of her inconsistencies, the bauble with which she is angry, the foo'stool of her exaltation ! Assert yourself, be what you were. Love, adore ; it will exalt your nature, bid you, a man, be a God ! Combine it, if you will, with sensation, perhaps they are inseparable ; be it so. But do not love one, who *cannot* return it, who if she *could*, *ought* to stifle her desire to do so. Love is not a whirlwind, that it is unvanquishable !

This epistle from Albert to Werter is forcibly written, with great power and energy ; but it wants the warmth, the tenderness, of Goethe and Rousseau. The tone is rather that of the novels of William Godwin, or Holcroft ; it is cold, bald, didactic, declamatory, frigid, rigid.

It is a real pleasure, a tranquil, contemplative, long-drawn pleasure, to write a novel ; a great luxury ! I speak from experience, for I once indulged in it myself ; and, during a long vacation, which I passed in London, I composed a novel. I walked every morning from the extreme west to the Temple, a distance of some five miles ; I was always seated at my desk by nine o'clock, and I continued writing until the clock struck four, when I walked home to dinner. This I did every day, except Sunday, for three or four months. It was in three volumes. I wrote it off freely, with scarcely a single erasure or alteration. The neat and natty Quaker, Thomas Paine, could hardly have produced fairer copy ; but our valued friend would have written in a very different strain ; no fictions, but only what he esteemed truths, home truths. Moreover, I wrote the whole of it with the same pen, just

nibbing it from time to time, but not often, and it was only a stump when I began to write with it. Cardinal Chigi wrote for three years with the same pen ; the Earl of Chesterfield, who relates the anecdote, says it was a proof of a little mind in his Eminence to notice such a trifle. We may congratulate ourselves, therefore, that little minds are still to be found amongst us.

The novel was never published. Several years after I had written it, I was asked to contribute to the *Monthly Chronicle*. I sent some articles composed expressly for that periodical, and afterwards, not having leisure to write more such, I gave portions of my unpublished novel. The greater part—almost the whole, I believe, of the first volume—was printed thus ; and if the *Monthly Chronicle* had not been discontinued, most probably the whole work would have appeared. It commences with No. 30, and terminates with No. 40, for then the Chronicle ceased, under the title *Some Recollections of Childhood* ; a title not by any means applicable to the novel, but which was continued from some previous contributions, of which it was sufficiently descriptive. It attracted no notice or attention, I think ; it was either too good, or not good enough for the public taste ; the *Monthly Chronicle* itself, indeed, did not prosper ; not being trashy enough for the readers of magazines.

However this may be, it is a great gratification to an author to write a work of fiction, and I wish that Shelley had enjoyed it also, as well as myself, and more than once. It is sweet for a sensitive mind to take refuge in imaginary scenes ; and by writing much he would have learned at last to write with moderation and calmness, as a horse too fresh at starting becomes, in the end, temperate through his own violence. I have sometimes thought of writing another tale, but I have always been distracted and diverted from this my diversion by other occupations and engagements, more lucrative, but less attractive.

To turn from the dominions of imagination to sober, sad realities, and to look back for a moment. Shelley had published anonymously, and without a date, in the preceding year, I think, in a small neatly printed pamphlet of twenty-three pages, his celebrated *Letter to Lord Ellenborough*, occasioned by the sentence which he passed on Mr. D. I. Eaton, as publisher of the third part of Paine's *Age of Reason*. It is written with force, fervour, and energy, and unflinching boldness—

possibly, we should add, with a burning zeal on behalf of the freedom of speech, of the pen and the press ; and the author resolutely and eloquently enforces the motto of his title-page—that religious opinions are of too high a nature for human interference, *Deorum offensa Diis curæ*—on the extreme principles of absolute, universal, unlimited toleration. It would be impossible to satisfy a liberal curiosity by extracts, it is only by a perusal of the work itself, that its nature, scope, and purpose can be fully understood ; and it ought to be read with a due consideration of the circumstances under which it was composed, in times before it was generally recognized, that persecution for the expression of opinions on matters of religion, in whatever manner expressed, invariably defeats its object. Now let us return to our flock.

The good Harriet had fully recovered from the fatigues of her first effort of maternity, and, in fact, she had taken it easily. She was now in full force, vigour, and effect ; roseate as ever, at times, perhaps, rather too rosy. She had entirely relinquished her favourite practice of reading aloud, which had been formerly a passion. I do not remember hearing her read even once after the birth of her child ; the accustomed exercise of the chest had become fatiguing, or she was weary of it. Neither did she read much to herself ; her studies, which had been so constant and exemplary, had dwindled away to nothing, and Bysshe had ceased to express any interest in them, and to urge her, as of old, to devote herself to the cultivation of her mind. When I called upon her, she proposed a walk, if the weather was fine, instead of the vigorous and continuous readings of preceding years.

The walk commonly conducted us to some fashionable bonnet-shop ; the reading, it is not to be denied, was sometimes tiresome, the contemplation of bonnets was always so. However, there is a variety, a considerable variety and diversity in the configuration of bonnets. When we descended into the region of caps, their sameness and insipidity I found intolerable. They appeared to me all alike, equally devoid of interest ; I could not bring myself to care whether there were two or three more sprigs in the crown, or a little more or less lace on the edge. Besides, a cap was never quite right ; it must be altered on the spot, taken in, or let out ; that could be done in a minute ; the minute was a long one. And, uniformly, too much or too little had been effected by the change ; it was to be altered again in another and a longer

minute. I rebelled against this, so I was left outside the shop, like a wicked rebel, for one moment.

To loiter in the street on a cold day, for the indefinite and interminable period of one moment, was a punishment too severe even for rebellion and high treason, for treason against a high-crowned cap. So the walking, as well as the reading, came to an end.

When I called on Bysshe, Harriet was often absent; she had gone out with Eliza,—gone to her father's. Bysshe himself was sometimes in London, and sometimes at Bracknell, where he spent a good deal of his time in visiting certain friends, with whom, at that period, he was in very close alliance, and upon terms of the greatest intimacy, and by which connection his subsequent conduct, I think, was much influenced.

In the spring of the year 1814, I changed the scene of my professional avocations and legal education from the Temple to Gray's Inn; to a sufficiently uninviting locality commanding a full view of Gray's Inn Lane. I had already passed one year with a conveyancer at York, and two years in the Temple at the chambers of a special pleader under the bar. I was now about to employ a fourth year with a barrister of considerable standing and eminence, who had much pleading business, but of a laborious, rather than of a lucrative description. It was said of him with a certain forensic facetiousness, that he had all the bones to pick. Cases of difficulty and intricacy were placed almost exclusively in his hands.

My position, therefore, with him was esteemed an enviable one, as being highly instructive, and so no doubt it was, so far as matters of that kind can afford any instruction. He had, moreover, the distinguished honour and happiness to be what is familiarly called the Devil of the Attorney-General, and consequently we had an abundant, never-failing supply of tiresome indictments, interminable criminal informations, and other wearisome crown-business.

He had four pupils. Of these the first was a younger son of a high judicial functionary: he fully confiding in his father's opportunities and inclination to job him at the commencement of professional life into lucrative offices, that were properly designed to afford consolation to persons of merit at the otherwise unrequited conclusion of it; relying entirely upon the wonted sordid and shameless rapacity, the necessary result of over-payment, never once saw the interior of his instructor's dingy chambers, and indeed they were not inviting.

The second pupil came once to chambers, to get out of the way of his father, who had come up from Bath with the avowed purpose of ear-wigging his son for some indiscretion ; and the young gentleman judged, that wherever else his father might seek him, he would never look for him at chambers : and he judged rightly.

The third attended pretty regularly, but he never chose to draw anything ; he employed himself diligently in copying all the precedents of indictments that he could lay his hands upon, and they were many ; of these he made a considerable collection. He was a baronet, and a man of good landed estate : what advantage he expected to derive from his MS. indictments, I could never learn, or even conjecture.

Consequently, whatever drawing was to be done fell entirely upon the fourth pupil, and the amount was by no means trifling. My mornings were fully occupied in covering quire after quire of draught-paper with endless repetitions and fatiguing tautology. The whole duty was laid upon the willing horse, and he was worked hard, but not to death.

My ancient and laudable master, who wore the aspect of an immemorial usage incarnate in the flesh, or rather vested in skin and bones, shaken together incessantly by a choking, husky cough, which was older and more inveterate than the period of legal memory, was detained all day in the courts at Westminster. He had more to attend to there than he could possibly have coughed through, slowly after his wont, during the full end and term of two thousand years, if it had been devoted solely to clearing off arrears, without a single new entry. It was only in the evening that he could do duty at chambers ; accordingly, we were employed together in going over what I had committed to paper during the morning, whilst he was shaking the arsenal, fulminating over Westminster Hall, and struggling to choke himself, without being absolutely suffocated, by his chronic spasmodic bursts of eloquence.

I was kept, therefore, almost every evening at chambers, often until a late hour, in settling our ponderous, voluminous masses of nonsensical jargon. The occupation was the more tedious, because my husky old Trebonian was dark through excess of brightness ; his mastery of law was so complete, that his certain science had become doubt, and he knew so much, that he knew nothing, like those who most truly know. In the midst of our elaborate settling, some doubt would present itself. He stated it modestly, and began on the instant to

take down his books, one after another ; to find authorities, to lay the open volumes upon the tables and chairs, and often upon the floor around us. When he had collected matter enough for a month's hard reading, he looked at the accumulated references in despair.

'Well ! Well ! Time presses ; I am afraid we must proceed. We must leave it as it is ; they will lose the term else. We will clear up the doubt another time'.

We went on pretty smoothly for a while, the chronic cough permitting ; but presently another doubt arose.

'Stay, stay ; stop a moment !'

Another set of books was taken down, opened and laid in a second, and not less formidable tier upon the former, until he had satisfied himself that the second Gordian knot was as insoluble as the first ; and the solution of this was postponed likewise.

'Let us go on ; the defendants are in a hurry, they want their plea ; we must try it for once as it is. We will clear up the matter another time'.

When the nightly sittings terminated, we were literally hemmed in on all sides with books, lying one upon another, and to be put back into their shelves unread by the old clerk next morning, in order to clear a passage to the next evening's seat of doubt.

O most egregious of black-letter judges, you have been sitting for some years now by the side of Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Æacus, have you made an appointment yet ? Have you at last fixed that other time, Old Boy, when all the matters which we left undecided are to be cleared up ; when all those points of pleading, questions, and doubts, are to be decided and set at rest ?

Such were the Diversions, not of Purley, or of Long Acre, but of Holborn Court, Gray's Inn ! They interfered sadly with my attendance in our select circles and elegant society ; however, it was very instructive.

My irksome duties were all the more irksome, inasmuch as no printed book of precedents, no printed forms, were admitted within the dingy walls of the dark chambers ; all was in manuscript. The most perplexed and complicated transactions, upon due examination, often resolved themselves into the common forms of pleading, and these were to be painfully written out, as well as the most special matters. It was doubtless the true course to keep the lovely, beneficent science of

special pleading in its pristine and perfect purity, but it was not the way to make money.

My frequent breach of engagements of pleasure, and my inevitable absence from our favourite and accustomed places of resort, gave great umbrage to Bysshe, who blamed my devotion to pursuits abhorrent to the Muses and Graces.

He inveighed in no measured terms against my self-sacrifice, my base preference of a dim peep through a blackened, uncleaned window at Gray's Inn Lane, to the full view of the glories of nature and art, which we might have enjoyed together. 'I am fully convinced, as far as human experience extends, and it extends a great way in every direction, both in time and in space, that lawyers, not priests, are true enemies of knowledge. Learned, meaning thereby most ignorant, is the designation, which they have adopted, and freely bestow upon each other: a learned friend, a learned brother, a learned judge, the learned gentleman. To be learned in the law, means to be unlearned and deeply ignorant of everything besides; learned only in the law; learned precisely as a mule, or a bullock, is learned; stubborn, stupid, and intractable'. The poor fellow seemed to prove by his bitterness, that he had already, in the slang of certain metaphysicians, a pure, anticipated, precognition of the favours and benefits, which he was destined ere long to receive at the hands of lawyers. But of this hereafter. Moreover, I have been told that Shelley had met with some unfavourable specimens in his own neighbourhood, hence he conceived so early in life an intense and abiding dislike of lawyers.

If I saw less of my incomparable friend during my bondage in Holborn Court, if we met less frequently than both of us eagerly desired, our pleasure was all the more vivid, when, triumphing over untoward circumstances and overcoming difficulties, we were able occasionally to come together.

It became necessary to perform some surgical operation on Ianthe, the excision of a tumour, I believe. The operation was successfully performed the able surgeon who operated, told me he expected that the young mother would leave the room; he hinted, and finally suggested that she ought to go away, saying plainly, that it would be too painful for her to witness it. But, no; she thought proper to remain, and the business proceeded. She stood by her infant, narrowly observing all that was done, and to the astonishment of the operator, and of all who were present, never betrayed, from

first to last, any—the smallest signs of emotion. In the whole course of his experience, he declared he never met with such another female ; she could have no feeling whatever. And he farther remarked, that a person who was able to discourse so calmly, so apathetically of suicide, could not possibly feel, under any circumstances, either for herself or for others.

Whether his conclusions were correct, I will not presume to affirm, or to deny ; I simply state the observations which he made to me, and which had been elicited by this singular manifestation of fortitude, of passive fortitude, or of Spartan insensibility.

In the spring of the year 1814, Shelley spent much of his time, as has been already related, at Bracknell ; coming occasionally to London, and going continually backwards and forwards.

The following elegant epistle, conceived and penned somewhat in the French taste, will throw light upon his proceedings there, and show the nature of his existence, amidst the fumes of a slightly sickly sentimentality :

BRACKNELL, *March 11, 1814.*

YOUR most agreeable and welcome letter is a bribe, which will hardly let me tell you how much I was startled at the assertion to which I owe it. I cannot, now I am sober, confirm what you say I maintained the other night, ' that, to follow our inclinations *on all occasions* is the first and great commandment '. Look round, and you will see that I could not mean this ; at least, as a general rule. And here is a new proof, which I wanted not, that from the warmth of argument never springs, or can spring, anything but misstatement and misconception. If I should grant anything like what you say, I must load it with such limitations, exceptions, and explanations, as will amount to a lawyer's interpretation, and that you will not thank me for. Perhaps the following precept of Champfort, taken in its best sense, will satisfy you, and certainly comes much nearer to my meaning : ' Jouis et fais jouir sans faire de mal à personne ; voilà toute la morale '. This I have always maintained against a dear and ingenious sophist, who labours hard to persuade us, that in concerns of the heart, ' s'abstenir c'est jouir ' ; and that it is wisdom to shut it against every feeling that can possibly bring with it any pain ; as if everything worth having must not be purchased at this price, which (to use the words of an arch friend of mine) ' God in his

infinite mischief' has been pleased to set on every pleasure he grants to us, his poor suffering children, whom in his love he chasteneth.

When I have been delighted by the beauty and fragrance of the rose, I have sometimes doubted whether we could strip it of its thorns without injuring its beauty ; and certainly I have never doubted whether it would be wise to renounce such beauty and fragrance because of the thorns that guard it. Alas ! yes ! Joys can and do pass away, and we must lament over them for ever ; but that which does not pass away is the susceptibility of pure joys ; which, with a lavish hand, nature scatters everywhere around her favoured children, to whom she gives, to make amends for all their sorrows, the power of going out of themselves for pleasure. A loving soul bears about within itself a living spring of affections, which keeps it fresh in spite of blights from evil things and evil men, and suffers no good feeling to wither and to die.

I will not have you despise homespun pleasures. Shelley is making a trial of them with us, and likes them so well, that he is resolved to leave off rambling, and to begin a course of them himself. Seriously, I think his mind and body want rest. His journeys after what he has never found, have racked his purse and his tranquillity. He is resolved to take a little care of the former in pity to the latter, which I applaud, and shall second with all my might. He has deeply interested us. In the course of your intimacy he must have made you feel what we now feel for him. He is seeking a house close to us ; and, if he succeeds, we shall have an additional motive to induce you to come among us in the summer.

If old Salomon had not his bewitching musical talent, his lively feeling, to which, by the bye, he owes it, would seize upon our affections, and hold them fast. Certain strains sung by my sister make me so melancholy I cannot bear them ; and, if anything could make me a convert to his iron philosophy, it would be to hear her sing, and to think that she has never been happy. I hear at this distance the heart-rending complaint of Ariadne, and feel that the world is a desert. With such a feeling as this Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse is closely connected. Her sufferings, often so forcibly and naturally expressed, interest me deeply. Read the long letter to the contemptible object of her unhappy passion, soon after his marriage, containing her character of him, and pity the woman, whose understanding so plainly saw his unworthiness, and yet was so

impotent in the struggle with her passion. This speedy answer to your letter says plainly, that whenever you feel inclined to favour me with a letter, it will be right for you to follow your inclination, which must be productive of great pleasure to me. My sister never writes ; scold her for me, if you can. At all times I can ill bear her silence, and less well now than ever, when I suspect it proceeds from low spirits. Thirty miles cannot separate me from my friends. That is not the worst evil of absence, for those we love we bear about in our hearts ; but, the groundless apprehensions which spring up to alarm us, when we might be tranquil, are very hard to bear. Next month we shall come to town to pass some weeks, when I hope we shall see you often. Shelley will write to you the first day he is in the humour for writing ; in the meantime he unites with every member of this family in kind regards, to which I can only add the assurance of my cordial and friendly attachment.

HARRIET B.

Excuse a thousand blunders and much confusion of expression, for I write, talking occasionally to Shelley of twenty different subjects.

To T. J. H.

BRACKNELL, *March 16, 1814.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I promised to write to you, when I was in the humour. Our intercourse has been too much interrupted for my consolation. My spirits have not sufficed to induce the exertion of determining to write to you. My value, my affection for you have sustained no diminution ; but I am a feeble, wavering, feverish being, who requires support and consolation, which his energies are too exhausted to return.

I have been staying with Mrs. B. for the last month ; I have escaped, in the society of all that philosophy and friendship combine, from the dismaying solitude of myself. They have revived in my heart the expiring flame of life. I have felt myself translated to a paradise, which has nothing of mortality, but its transitoriness ; my heart sickens at the view of that necessity, which will quickly divide me from the delightful tranquillity of this happy home—for it has become my home. The trees, the bridge, the minutest objects, have already a place in my affections.

My friend, you are happier than I. You have the pleasures

as well as the pains of sensibility. I have sunk into a premature old age of exhaustion, which renders me dead to everything, but the unenviable capacity of indulging the vanity of hope, and a terrible susceptibility to objects of disgust and hatred.

My temporal concerns are slowly rectifying themselves; I am astonished at my own indifference to their event. I live here like the insect that sports in a transient sunbeam, which the next cloud shall obscure for ever. I am much changed from what I was. I look with regret to our happy evenings at Oxford, and with wonder at the hopes which in the excess of my madness I there encouraged. Burns says, you know,

Pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flower—the bloom is fled;
Or like the snow-falls in the river,
A moment white—then lost for ever.

Eliza is still with us—not here!—but will be with me when the infinite malice of destiny forces me to depart. I am now but little inclined to contest this point. I certainly hate her with all my heart and soul. It is a sight which awakens an inexpressible sensation of disgust and horror, to see her caress my poor little *Lanthe*, in whom I may hereafter find the consolation of sympathy. I sometimes feel faint with the fatigue of checking the overflowings of my unbounded abhorrence for this miserable wretch. But she is no more than a blind and loathsome worm, that cannot see to sting.

I have begun to learn Italian again. I am reading '*Beccaria dei delitti e pene*'. His essay seems to contain some excellent remarks, though I do not think that it deserves the reputation it has gained. *Cornelia* assists me in this language. Did I not once tell you, that I thought her cold and reserved? She is the reverse of this, as she is the reverse of everything bad. She inherits all the divinity of her mother.

What have you written? I have been unable even to write a common letter. I have forced myself to read *Beccaria* and *Dumont's Bentham*. I have sometimes forgotten that I am not an inmate of this delightful home—that a time will come which will cast me again into the boundless ocean of abhorred society.

I have written nothing, but one stanza, which has no meaning, and that I have only written in thought :

Thy dewy looks sink in my breast ;
 Thy gentle words stir poison there ;
 Thou hast disturbed the only rest
 That was the portion of despair !
 Subdued to Duty's hard control,
 I could have borne my wayward lot :
 The chains that bind this ruined soul
 Had cankered then—but crushed it not.

This is the vision of a delirious and distempered dream, which passes away at the cold clear light of morning. Its surpassing excellence and exquisite perfections have no more reality than the colour of an autumnal sunset. Adieu !

Believe me truly and affectionately yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

I hear that you often see the N.'s. Present my kindest regards to Mrs. N. ; remember me also to her husband, who you know, has quarrelled with me, although I have not consented to quarrel with him.

To T. J. H.

In this most touching, melancholy letter only did Shelley ever mention to me the children of his first marriage ; and here he speaks of Ianthe merely incidentally, and rather to show his dislike for another, than his love of her. I never heard any explanation of the cause of the intense aversion to which he gives utterance in such bitter terms. Every allowance and deduction being made for the fervour and fire of his poetic temperament, and for his sensitive, impressible, imaginative nature, his strong language will still seem far too strong. His violent antipathy was probably not less unreasonable than his former excess of deference, and blind compliance and concessions towards a person, whose counsels and direction could never have been prudent, safe, or judicious.

Bysshe was completely fascinated with his paradise in Berkshire, of which an eye-witness will presently attempt to give a sketch. He always called the presiding divinity 'Meimouné'. Why he gave her this name, I could never learn. She did not resemble the heroine of the oriental tale in appearance, conduct, or opinions. A lady, who was an inmate of an eastern harem, would be little versed in French sentimentality ; certainly Meimouné never read Wieland's *Agathon* in the French translation, or in the German original ; and never held or taught, that love, to be true, genuine, and

no counterfeit, of which beware, must be purely a sentiment, neither more, nor less.

CHAPTER XXX

It was the Spring Circuit, the absence of my Common Law Mentor on the Northern Circuit gave me some short respite of leisure ; the dark Chambers were shut up ; but that my legal mind might not perish of inanition, lacking wholesome intellectual food, he kindly lent me, as a special favour, for my necessary sustenance, whilst he was away, a thick folio volume of his MS. Precedents. I patiently transcribed the most tempting of these in the morning at my lodgings. I was finishing the task of the day and about to go forth to dinner, when transcription and dinner were suddenly put an end to by a strange and unexpected apparition. A friend entered the room in a state of extreme agitation.

‘What is the matter?’

‘You must proceed to Bracknell instantly’.

‘But why?’

‘You must go instantly!’

‘Instantly, I have not dined’.

‘It is of no consequence’.

It was of no consequence whatever to him certainly, and of but little to myself. ‘To-day, it is late ; will it not be better to go to-morrow morning ? Will not that do as well ?’

‘No ! You must go at once ; to-day, instantly, or you will not get a conveyance’.

To set out so abruptly, on so short a notice, was rather inconvenient ; however, the distance was trifling, the journey not formidable, and I should find Bysshe there, and my friend’s anxiety would not brook a refusal, or even a brief delay.

“You need not take anything with you ; you will find all you can want there’.

He seized my arm and marched me off to some coach-office in the city. I gathered from my uneasy companion on our way, that his lady was at Bracknell, staying with the same family, as Shelley ; that she had lately gone thither, and had been taken very ill ; so ill that she would not say how ill she was. She asserted indeed, that she was not at all ill, which

was the more alarming. Her letters were most unsatisfactory. 'So you must go and see how she is, and return and report to me the condition in which you find her'. The mission was a delicate and embarrassing one, far more unpleasant than the sudden journey. 'I am no judge of the illness of a lady, nor indeed of any one. I do not understand such matters. She may be ill, and not like to tell me what is the nature of her complaint; if she tells me, I shall not half comprehend her. If it be a serious illness, she will be in bed, and then, of course, I shall not be allowed to see her. Send some medical man!'

I named two, or three. 'Any one of these will go; will go as a friend, if you wish it.'

'I have no confidence in any of them, but much in you; none in anybody else. You must go; I cannot go myself, I dare not leave my children.'

He urged his suit with such a passionate, pitiable earnestness and mournful vehemence, that it was impossible to refuse.

'You will get there in good time, it is only thirty miles; they will give you dinner, you need be in no apprehension about that. Stay there a whole day, stay over to-morrow. They will be charmed to have you with them. See as much of my poor wife as you can; be as much with her as possible; and then come back the next day, dine with me at six, and tell me what you think of things.'

For this slight service, which he esteemed so important, his gratitude would be eternal, and would know no bounds. Submission was inevitable. I was placed on the top of a heavy coach, which went as far as Englefield Green, and would leave me there. It was close to Bracknell; anybody would tell me the way; I should be there in a moment. It was a heavy coach indeed, and a wondrous slow one; we tarried in Piccadilly so long, that it seemed as if the prescribed period of absence was to be spent at the *White Horse Cellar*. But it was not so, however; we stopt at every pothouse on the road, so that it was quite dark, when we reached at last our ultimate destination. It had been a tedious journey, but we have accomplished it at last. So now for Bracknell; it is close at hand; I shall be there in a moment; so now for Bracknell and dinner!

I inquired the way.

'Have you never been there before?'

'Never'.

'Then you will not be able to find the way; you must have

somebody to go with you. The ostler would go, but he must have five shillings for his trouble'.

'Five shillings! It is close at hand'.

'It is six long miles off and more'.

I thought the fellow augmented the distance in order to augment his pay. However it was a trifle; the man shall have his money; and in truth I began to suspect that in reality Bracknell was not quite so close at hand as my anxious, uxorious friend in his eagerness to dispatch me had supposed, or asserted.

'Are you ready, Sir? It is rather a long step, but I will take you the shortest way! Any how it is a long six miles! Where is your luggage?'

'I have none'. I could see by the light of the stable lantern, that the good man was disappointed. It would have been more respectable, more satisfactory to himself, more in accordance with strict professional etiquette, more comfortable, to have carried a huge trunk on his shoulder all the way, than to walk empty-handed with a passenger, who had no luggage. Notwithstanding his disappointment, we set out together; it was a dark night, dark as pitch; I never was out in a darker night; the sky was overcast; no traces of sun, or moon, not a star was to be seen. I could not discern any object; I could not see my guide. I followed, as well as I could, the sound of his footsteps, to catch which I listened with painful attention; and when from the nature of the ground they were inaudible, I spoke to him, that the sound of his voice might lead me. I could only advance slowly therefore, and timidly, for I did not know where I might plunge the next step. The distance seemed infinite; sixty times six miles and more. We are on Ascot Heath, he informed me more than once. I have never seen that celebrated spot. I have never set foot on it before, or since. It might have been Christchurch Meadows, Salisbury Plain, the racecourse at York, Doncaster, or Epsom, or the Steppes of Tartary, for anything that I could discover. A gay, noisy, busy, crowded scene, swarming with life, and brilliant with fashion; such was my idea of Ascot Heath, how different did I find the reality from what I imagined, in this and other passages through life. It was a land of darkness, of thick, black darkness, of solitude, stillness, and silence. We met no one, heard no greeting, no voice, no sound; we saw no light, until at last we came to a few scattered lights and to

Bracknell. It was my fortune to visit another place of pleasure of even greater celebrity some ten, or twelve, years afterwards, in the midst of darkness not less intense. I would gladly have seen something of the locality of Capua, renowned even to a proverb ; I passed through that city twice with the Courier, but on both occasions in the middle of winter and in the middle of the night. It was covered with the same impenetrable veil of thick darkness, which hung over Ascot Heath, but it did not lie hushed in the like silence. I heard a mighty noise in my guarded progress through the vast and impregnable fortress ; the raising and lowering of drawbridges ; the opening and shutting of gates ; the loud, vociferous, and unceasing challenges of the sentinels, and the clattering of the hoofs of our strong escort of light horsemen ; for in 1825 robberies were rife, the banditti were going a-head in the south of Italy.

A few scattered lights cheered me ; I was at Bracknell. We found the house without difficulty ; the ostler had well earned his five shillings, he received his money cheerfully and civilly. Our approach was noiseless ; a neat handmaiden opened the door, and passed me without a word into the sitting-room. If the ghost of Samuel had found his way from Endor, and walking across Ascot Heath, without luggage, had stood before them, the ladies, for all present were ladies, could not have been more amazed. Bysshe was not there ; he was absent in London. This was too bad. Who coming on purpose to see him, and by express appointment, could ever expect to find him ? But my visit was unlooked for ; he had no right to go away ; it was not fair ! I had breakfasted at eight and slightly, for I was to write all the morning, and to dine, as I supposed, betimes ; I had not taken food all day, and it was now late, ten o'clock, or more. Dinner was not to be named : so gross a piece of sensuality was not to be thought of ; at least, at that hour. But there was tea, excellent tea ; tea in large cups, and in abundance, and thick bread and butter. There were three charming ladies, waiting upon me, like ministering angels, and much charming conversation ; what was wanting, then, to make it a perfect paradise ? Nothing, surely ; heavenly harpings would only have been an interruption !

We sat up frightfully late ; they severally expounded the scriptures of life and love, and elegance ; and my heart burnt within me. It really seemed that, after Bysshe his

fashion, and like the shepherds of the East, we were to watch all night.

Why we parted ; how we got to bed ; why the party ever broke up, and are not sitting together in Bracknell at this hour, is a mystery which I could never unravel. Nevertheless, I found myself, somehow or other, in Bysshe's bedroom. His clothes were scattered about ; there was much to remind me of him, although I could never forget him ; in particular, there were books on all sides ; wherever a book could be laid, was an opened book, turned down on its face to keep his place. It is sweet to sit up late ; but it is not sweet to rise late. It was fully eleven o'clock before I was allowed to set my longing eyes on tea and bread and butter for the second time. I had risen in pretty good time, and I tried to still my hunger by dipping into such books as were lying about the room ; they were chiefly French.

I did not perceive that much was the matter with the interesting invalid, nor did she profess to be seriously indisposed. In the course of the day a walk was proposed to me. It was my first visit to Bracknell ; I ought to see something of the neighbourhood, it was pleasant. I assented : the invalid would attend me ; she would show me High Elms, where Shelley had resided, and much besides.

Upon this offer a veto was authoritatively put on the instant. The whole constitution was so terribly shattered, the nerves were in such a debilitated state, that to go out of doors would be an act of madness, of suicide. The inhibition was submitted to with an ill grace ; if the sympathy engendered by imputed sickness was agreeable, the restraints which it brought with it were not so. There was a youth with us, who had been educated abroad, in France ; he was extremely polite, and sadly to seek ; the common result of such an education. He alone was to accompany me, the third party being under injunction to stay at home.

'Never mind', said the fair sufferer, somewhat contumaciously, as we sallied forth, 'I shall soon return to London, and then we will have a good long walk together in Kensington Gardens.'

On the hill opposite Bracknell is a village, called Hamstead, or Hampstead ; we walked thither. It was pleasant enough, but the Berkshire Hampstead is infinitely inferior to the Hampstead of Middlesex. We called at the house of a spinster of stout maturity ; she welcomed us cordially, and began pre-

sently to discourse vigorously concerning the Rights of Women. The Frenchman stared, and I was silent ; in truth, her flowing and rapid delivery did not allow answer, or interpellation. My juvenile companion pointed out Shelley's house. ' Mr. Shelley is a man of splendid talents and overwhelming eloquence, but he is very eccentric ; a most extraordinary being ! ' He told me several anecdotes, which in themselves and from his mode of relating them were whimsical enough. One in particular, illustrative of the mania for navigation was characteristic. At the bottom of the garden at Bracknell was a ditch, or riverlet, flowing into the Loddon, a tributary stream of the Thames. Pope's Pastoral has made the Loddon, under the name Lodona, a classical stream ; the tributary's tributary, the nameless ditch, was not deemed unworthy of the notice of a divine poet. Bysshe went to sea upon it stealthily in one of the washing-tubs of his amiable hostess, rowing, or punting his frail bark with a stick used in washing, until the bottom came out. He then freely took possession of another vessel, until the whole fleet of tubs had suffered shipwreck. When the great and terrible day of washing arrived, when every tub was required to give an account of itself, they had all vanished, and as the too fearless navigator had vanished likewise, it was some time before they discovered what had become of them. And Calypso and her attendant nymphs sighed in vain for a clean shift. The purple vintage of the grape has its own peculiar results, and so has the white vintage of the wash.

At some hour of the day we had dinner ; but it was not much ; it was irregular, unpunctual, uncomfortable, inconclusive, according to the ordinary course of proceedings in such matters, which were slightly regarded by this family. In the evening there was the same gallant tea-drinking as before. After a plain, scanty, homely, almost uncatable dinner, good, strong, excellent tea in large breakfast-cups, without stint or limit, restored the balance of power, of trade, and of the constitution. The ladies were never weary of the sweet courtesies of making tea, and of handing it about to us graciously and gracefully ; and there was thick bread and butter in abundance, in well filled, well piled, horns of plenty, and thereby chiefly was life sustained. Here extremes met ; the simple fare of the poorest old woman, of the starved labourer and his children, through a stern, iron necessity, was the diet, through free will and deliberate choice, of the most

refined, elegant, accomplished, intellectual specimens of humanity ; of humanity nearly approaching to divinity. A young lady never looks so like an angel, I observed to Bysshe, as when she is handing one a large cup of good strong tea.

' Oh ! you wretch ' , he exclaimed ; ' what a horridly sensual idea ! '

A lovely young creature gave him cup after cup. He was greedily swallowing the nectar, discussing and disputing the while, and trembling with emotion ; and pouring the precious liquor into his bosom, upon his knees, and into his shoes, and spilling it on the carpet. She stood before him ; and, when he had emptied his cup, she gently wiped him with a white cambric handkerchief.

' Was I so far wrong, then ? ' I asked him in a whisper. For once, the philosopher was impatient of the truth, and returned no answer.

In the palace of the daughter of the Sun, Circe ; in the cave of Calypso, the Calypso of Telemachus, not of Ulysses ; where, to clasp the hands in agony, to sigh profoundly, and to turn up the eyes in passionate anguish, was bliss, after the ordinances of the French school of sentiment, by which Shelley was at that period somewhat caught, his presence seemed indispensable. We greatly needed Bysshe that evening. We sat up late again, had no beauty-sleep ; excessively late—half the night. The penalty paid for the indulgence was, rising fearfully late in the morning, or rather daytime, and waiting one's patience out of joint for breakfast. Such were the delights of Shelley's paradise in Bracknell.

The prescribed period of my visit of inspection had expired ; my mission was fulfilled ; it was incumbent upon me to return and make my report. Monsieur very obligingly conducted me by a pleasant walk upon the road from Bagshot to London. A coach soon came by, and he politely bowed me up to the roof. I arrived at the house of my friend in time for dinner. I found him calm and contented, and my report was satisfactory—and so was a good dinner. I had been fed plentifully on sighs and smiles ; these stay the stomach, but do not fill it ; and after feeding for two days on angels' food, on the celestial manna of refined sentiment, a good dinner, through the force of contrast, had more than usual attraction. It may be true, notwithstanding, as an abstract proposition, that dinner, to be quite pure, ought to be purely a sentiment :

if we sit down to table at all, we should sit down, not to eat and drink, but to weep.

Wieland's *Agathon* was the leading classic, the text-book, in that university ; the work in which all who would graduate were to be examined, which it was necessary to master in order to obtain a degree, which all who ventured to contend for a prize must take up. *Agathon* was read, not in the original, for the German language was not cultivated or understood by the professors, but as *Histoire d'Agathon*, in the French translation of Citizen Pernay. It is in three volumes only, not in four, and contains about three-quarters of the original work. The translator says, in his preface : ' Nous avons suivi l'original aussi près que possible ; mais nous nous sommes permis d'abrégé quelques chapitres, et de supprimer des longueurs : peut être M. Wieland aurait-il agi de même, s'il avait écrit pour des Français. Le goût de la nation Allemande est si différent du nôtre, qu'il est possible qu'on nous reproche encore d'avoir conservé des passages, que nous n'avons pas eu le courage de faire disparaître '. This book was immediately put into the hands of a neophyte. Shelley devoured it eagerly ; he was fascinated with it, indeed. I read it with pleasure in the French version, for it was the first time I had met with it. I have read it twice, at least, with augmented gratification, long afterwards, in the original language. I know not whether it has ever been rendered into English ; I never met with an English translation. In omitting the 'longueurs', the citizen translator has left out the most valuable portions. I ventured to remark to my charming preceptresses, when they taught on the authority of this work, as well as on their own, that love should be purely a sentiment ; that this admirable doctrine was not inculcated throughout the whole of the history. At the commencement, certainly, *Agathon* was rather fast. They answered, that the opening chapters of his tale did Wieland no credit ; it would have been far better, on every account, if he had omitted them. The reader ought to attend to the latter books only, and entirely to disregard the commencement. This may be sage advice, no doubt, but it is not easy for a young man always to bear it in mind, and duly and discreetly to attend to it. Besides, the conclusion of the classical romance would hardly be intelligible to one who had not read the earlier adventures.

The glowing young Platonic poet embraced the elegant and

learned fiction with ardour, and accepted it with entire faith, as the testament of Platonic love.

BRACKNELL, *April* 18, 1814.

Do you forgive my silence, for I cannot forgive myself, and yet it has been quite impossible to write. My mind has not been free one hour since you were here ; and even now I only send a few words to say, that you must wait for an answer to your letter till I come to town, when I shall have the pleasure of telling you how entirely and unavoidably I have been engaged.

Mrs. N. is wonderfully recovered. Air and exercise, and friendly conversation, are just restoring her good looks. Shelley is again a widower ; his beauteous half went to town on Thursday with Miss Westbrook, who is gone to live, I believe, at Southampton.

All here unite in kind remembrance ; and I entreat you to excuse this abrupt and hasty scrawl, which does not satisfy my conscience or inclination, but which is all I can command time for to-day. I will let you know when we arrive in town ; in the meanwhile, I am, very sincerely yours,

To T. J. H.

HARRIET B.

A criminal information against Lord Cochrane and three other persons of less note, for what was familiarly called the Stock Exchange Hoax, was the most remarkable of sundry exploits in special pleading that were achieved in our murky den at Gray's Inn. It was performed under the auspices of the Solicitor-General of the day, a deaf man, as deaf as a post, but by no means inconsiderable for legal attainments, and not ungentlemanlike. He evinced extraordinary zeal in the matter. The prosecution was conducted through pure political motives, in order to get rid of a troublesome Member of Parliament—a bold, uncompromising reformer ; and under an exaggerated notion of the effects of a conviction for a conspiracy, some antiquated crotchets about the villainous judgment, which it was imagined, might be pronounced against the defendants ; and that the spurs, so hardly won by the gallant and patriotic officer, might be hacked off with a cleaver, so that he would thereby be for ever incapacitated from sitting in the House of Commons. A conviction and a severe sentence were obtained ; but in other respects, the prosecution,

like all other political persecutions, failed in its principal object. The victim was accounted a martyr for the popular cause ; the people, whom he served, stood by him firmly, and a penny subscription paid the fine imposed upon him ; and he was a greater favourite with the mob than he had ever been before he was attacked by the Government. However, we performed our part well ; the genius of special pleading triumphed over all technical and other difficulties. We did the trick : right or wrong, we did the trick ! The defendants could not escape from the net which we spread for them, and in the event threw over them. It was not in vain, that this right hand wrote a thousand times : ' The said Charles Random de Berenger, the said John Cawthorne Butt, the said Alexander Cochrane Johnson, and the said Alexander Cochrane, commonly called Lord Cochrane, being such evil disposed persons, as aforesaid '. My industrious fellow-pupil declared, if the information had been an indictment, he would certainly have copied it. It was well for him that it was not ; he had a fortunate escape. He said, that we were bound to go into court to hear the event of my voluminous draft ; and, accordingly, on the day of the trial, we walked to the City together, and entered the crowded court.

Lord Ellenborough had come to Guildhall to get a verdict at all hazards. He was rolling about on the bench like a stormy sea, that seemed somehow to desire to calm itself. His head was tossed up and down as a cockboat in the surf ; like the white buoy on the bar amidst the breakers. He was clumsily courteous to the jury, to the defendants, to everybody ; roughly bland in an awkward fashion, like a pet bear, and freely rejecting immaterial evidence with conspicuous impartiality. The appearance of the defendants certainly was not prepossessing. The three first-named seemed to be at home, but the noble and gallant admiral was ill at ease ; it was quite plain that he did not like to be thus aground, stranded, but heartily wished himself afloat again. As regards Lord Cochrane, at least, it was not a creditable proceeding, I confess, although I drew the information myself ; but to discuss the matter here would be inopportune, even if its interest had not long since passed away. On the level floor of the old court of King's Bench it was impossible to hear, or to see, with advantage. The old courts at Guildhall were disgraceful to the administration of justice and to the city of London. To eat and drink and job away their funds, not to erect suitable

buildings for public purposes, was in those days esteemed the paramount, the sole duty of a municipal corporation.

I stood in the court for an hour or two, amongst the crowd on the floor, and then withdrew ; my fellow-pupil remained. I contrived to gather from the bench that I should leave the affair in very good hands ; that my criminal information was pretty safe. In Cheapside I fell in with Shelley : I spoke to him of the trial that was depending. He rarely took an interest in such matters, and he expressed no curiosity as to the result. We walked westward, through Newgate Street. When we reached Skinner Street, he said 'I must speak with Godwin ; come in, I will not detain you long'.

I followed him through the shop, which was the only entrance, and upstairs. We entered a room on the first floor ; it was shaped like a quadrant. In the arc were windows ; in one radius a fire-place, and in the other a door, and shelves with many old books. William Godwin was not at home. Bysshe strode about the room, causing the crazy floor of the ill-built, unowned dwelling-house to shake and tremble under his impatient footsteps. He appeared to be displeased at not finding the fountain of Political Justice. 'Where is Godwin ?' he asked me several times, as if I knew. I did not know, and, to say the truth, I did not care. He continued his uneasy promenade ; and I stood reading the names of old English authors on the backs of the venerable volumes, when the door was partially and softly opened. A thrilling voice called 'Shelley !' A thrilling voice answered, 'Mary !' And he darted out of the room, like an arrow from the bow of the far-shooting king. A very young female, fair and fair-haired, pale indeed, and with a piercing look, wearing a frock of tartan, an unusual dress in London at that time, had called him out of the room. He was absent a very short time—a minute or two ; and then returned. 'Godwin is out ; there is no use in waiting'. So we continued our walk along Holborn.

'Who was that, pray ?' I asked ; 'a daughter ?'

'Yes.'

'A daughter of William Godwin ?'

'The daughter of Godwin and Mary.'

This was the first time, on the day of Lord Cochrane's trial, that I beheld a very distinguished lady, of whom I have much to say hereafter. It was but the glance of a moment, through a door partly opened. Her quietness certainly struck me,

and possibly also, for I am not quite sure on this point, her paleness and piercing look. Nothing more was said on either side about the young female. 'Do you think he loved her?' First impressions are indelible; and in them alone are the truth and reality of things for the most part to be found. Truth lives at the bottom of a well; perhaps, rather, at the fountain head. It may be well, therefore, to trace my earliest impressions on this subject to their source. I spent five or six years of my boyhood at a public school in an old cathedral city. The young flock, of which I was a member, and eventually the captain, were styled by ourselves, and designated universally by others, 'The Grammar Boys'. In the German universities, all who are not students, youths, or otherwise matriculated in the university, are termed Philistines. For all other lads in the town, be they who they might, we had a still less courteous appellation; they were known to us only as 'the Blackguards'. Of their existence our fists might be accounted the final cause; they had been created solely that they might be licked by us, whenever an opportunity and a pretence offered; consequently, they had the discretion to keep out of the way of the Grammar Boys as much as possible.

The ecclesiastical corporation was wealthy; one of the richest. There were bishops, and deans, and prebendaries, and archdeacons in plenty; but these, our court and trump cards, were only turned up occasionally. They came to the audits, and to be handsomely paid for feasting sumptuously, and entertaining hospitably during a residence of three weeks a-piece in every year; in a word, the grandees only came when something was to be gotten. The constant quantities were stars of a lesser magnitude; and they, like the poor, were always with us. Precentors, sacristans, librarians, minor canons, vicars choral, choristers, organists; in short, the whole staff of a cathedral of the first class, and many parochial clergy who held livings in the city, or the neighbourhood, small benefices, and, for the most part, the options of the minor canons. The higher ecclesiastics were not deficient in hospitality and attention to those boys with whom they were acquainted, and a slight acquaintance sufficed; but their visits were few and far between, as the visits of angels.

The roast pigs, the roast geese, the roast hares; the loins of veal and hams; the overflowing dishes of green peas, asparagus and new potatoes; the well-sugared, juicy, fruit-pies, with their attendant custards; plum-pudding with its brandy

sauce—according to the vicissitudes of the seasons—were set out on Sundays punctually at two o'clock on the boards of the poorer clergy, to cheer their famished families and friends : so copious and nutritious was the milk of the dun cow ! How many a genial Sunday dinner did the hungry grammar boy share with these humble, apostolical men ; to look back upon their simple, but succulent fare, through the long vista of half a century, is almost as satisfying as a full meal. Why, in God's name, and in the name of our holy religion, did they sacrilegiously plunder those venerable institutions, and suppress or diminish them, instead of restoring them to their pristine efficiency, by enforcing residence, exorcizing the demons of pluralities, jobbing, and nepotism.

In a cathedral, the precentor is the genius of the place, the coryphæus of the choir. He appoints the musical services, chooses the anthem, and sings aloud the first verse of the Psalms as a quick chaunt in D. minor, or a slow measure in any other key he may please to select ; and it is worse than sacrilege to swerve half a tone from his irresponsible guidance. The mighty organ itself, with its ten thousand tongues, and infinitely varying voices, dares to speak only as he bids it. A huge cauliflower wig, well whitened, surmounted by a portentous shovel hat, is a crown of glory to the aged, the spectacles being of a like majesty, vast pebbles in ponderous silver frames, glittering like the lamps of a carriage. An ample black coat, with large buttons, a lapelled waistcoat, black shorts, square-toed shoes, bright silver buckles on the instep and at the knee, and a gold-headed cane of a solid structure, are the proper accompaniments and consolations of our declining years. The externals of old age have been given up, and with them all due reverence. Nowadays an old man must needs dress himself like a boy, in order that he may look like an old fool, and be treated as one.

By the worthy pastor, who imprinted my name upon my forehead at the baptismal font, I was furnished with an introduction to the estimable precentor. I took the letter to his house. An old housekeeper, whose dress harmonized with the costume of her master, came to the door. She wore a flowered gown of chintz, radiant with colossal flowers of the brightest hues ; such as I have subsequently seen Dutch matrons wearing in Holland. 'Master is not at home ; but the girls are, they will be glad to see you. Pray walk in !' That was well. The precentor might have inquired after the

supine of some Latin verb ; or have required the præteritum perfectum passivum of a Greek barytone ; with the girls there could be nothing worse than battledore and shuttlecock, more puzzling than hide and seek. The reverend leader of the choir had no son living, but he was blessed with three daughters. To them I was ushered in, to the tall, gaunt, bony, pale-eyed virgins of forty or fifty summers. The worthy housekeeper had known them ever since they were born, before indeed, and she persisted steadfastly in calling them 'the girls', in spite of Time himself. They were Blues and, more, learned ladies ; so learned, that it makes the head ache, even now, to think how learned they were.

'Take a seat. Could Homer write ? Wolfius, in his *Prologomena*, says he could not. What do you say, sir ?'

'I do not know ; but our vicar can, and here is his letter of introduction.'

It was a come off, but it would not do. The letter was laid unopened upon a desk. I must pass my examination. It seemed as if I was sitting for the gold-medal, and had three examining masters upon me at once, so mercilessly did they pluck me. I heard then, for the first time, what I have often heard since, that Herodotus was the father of history ; and I heard much besides—some things, I believe, that I never heard before or since. I was invited to dine next Sunday. The precentor was a merry, good-natured old man, and without exception the best and happiest punster I ever met with ; and what was still better, he had made over, without any reservation, all his learning to his daughters.

To call in the course of the week, after dining on Sunday, was the rule. 'They are out, except the youngest of the girls, Miss Debby ; you can go into her'. Miss Deborah was sitting by herself with a small volume in her hand ; she laid it down open on the table. 'Did he love her ? Do you think he loved her ?' That was a poser ! It was the stiffest question they ever put. When they confined themselves to the ancient world, I could give some sort of a guess answer ; but when they descended to modern literature, which they condescended to read, and it was a great condescension, I was quite lost. She put the book into my hand—Godwin's *Memoirs of Mary* ; a work, which at that time was a novelty, at least in a provincial town. 'Of course, you have read this ?' Of course, I had not. I had never even heard of William Godwin, or Mary Wollstonecraft : how should I ?

She read several passages aloud to me, and concluded with the question, 'Did he love her? Do you think he loved her?'

I looked at her beseechingly, and would have said: 'Ask me anything you like about *τύππω*. I am pretty strong in the verbs; and I can make you a Greek tree; but I am a novice in love!' She was moved by my supplicating looks, and so the kind creature let me go. When I saw, for the first time, the daughter of the little book, with whose birth it concludes; of the little book that had scared me so cruelly; how vividly did the sight of her recall my adventure with 'the girl' Deborah! I could not answer your question then, dearest Debby, being only in my thirteenth year; but I can now. If you meant to ask, as I have no doubt you did, whether there is any peculiar advantage in the new philosophy of love, I can assure you, confidently, my good girl, that there is none whatever.

Let us take one more peep at Field Place; one more only, and it will be the last, for it was Bysshe's last visit to his paternal hearth and native home. In the beginning of the summer of 1814, he walked one day alone from Bracknell to Horsham. A long and a pleasant walk, I should imagine. He was in an excited state, and had revelations by the way, and saw celestial visions, of which more hereafter.

A young officer in a marching regiment had been quartered some little time at Horsham; he met with hospitality and kindness, as others did, at Field Place. He assisted at the brief return of the prodigal son; he was present at the last visit, and he has given us a written account of it, from which I will extract such particulars as are interesting. It is strangely interlarded with laudations of his benefactors; such rapturous gratitude is creditable to his feelings; but in mercy to all persons concerned, it is expedient to omit his demonstrations of it. One may infer from the tune and temper of Bysshe's last letter to myself, that his family might have had him then on reasonable, on easy terms, had they known how to negotiate a treaty of peace. They might probably have lured the wild hawk, the peregrine falcon, back to his perch without difficulty. Possibly they did not know it; certainly they did not know how to set about it; and the young wanderer was reserved for other, and for higher and more important destinies: man proposes, but man seldom disposes. It is a strange and a sad picture of the fruits of stubborn, intractable, wrong-headed violence to contemplate his mother and sisters timidly entertaining for the last time the divine poet

disguised as a soldier. The friendly reception of the young officer at Field Place is related, and the narrative proceeds thus.

'At this time I had not seen Shelley, but the servants, especially the old butler, Laker, had spoken of him to me. He seemed to have won the hearts of the whole household. Mrs. Shelley often spoke to me of her son ; her heart yearned after him with all the fondness of a mother's love. It was during the absence of his father and the three youngest children, that the natural desire of a mother to see her son induced her to propose that he should pay her a short visit. At this time he resided somewhere in the country with his first wife and their only child, Ianthe. He walked from his house, until within a very few miles of Field Place, when a farmer gave him a seat in his travelling cart. As he passed along, the farmer, ignorant of the quality of his companion, amused Bysshe with descriptions of the country and its inhabitants. When Field Place came in sight, he told whose seat it was ; and as the most remarkable incident connected with the family, that young Master Shelley seldom went to church. The poor fellow arrived at Field Place exceedingly fatigued. I came there the following morning to meet him. I found him with his mother and his two elder sisters in a small room off the drawing-room, which they had named Confusion Hall. He received me with frankness and kindness, as if he had known me from childhood, and at once won my heart. I fancy I see him now, as he sat by the window, and hear his voice, the tones of which impressed me with his sincerity and simplicity. His resemblance to his sister, Elizabeth, was as striking as if they had been twins. His eyes were most expressive, his complexion beautifully fair ; his features exquisitely fine ; his hair was dark, and no peculiar attention to its arrangement was manifest. In person he was slender and gentleman-like, but inclined to stoop ; his gait was decidedly not military. The general appearance indicated great delicacy of constitution. One would at once pronounce of him, that he was something different from other men. There was an earnestness in his manner, and such perfect gentleness of breeding and freedom from everything artificial as charmed every one. I never met a man who so immediately won upon me. The generosity of his disposition and utter unselfishness imposed upon him the necessity of strict self-denial in personal comforts. Consequently he was obliged to be most econo-

mical in his dress. He one day asked us, how we liked his coat, the only one he had brought with him. We said it was very nice, it looked as if new. Well, said he, it is an old black coat, which I have had done up, and smartened with metal buttons and a velvet collar. As it was not desirable that Bysshe's presence in the country should be known, we arranged that on walking out he should wear my scarlet uniform, and that I should assume his outer garments. So he donned the soldier's dress, and sallied forth. His head was so remarkably small, that though mine be not large, the cap came down over his eyes, the peak resting on his nose, and it had to be stuffed before it would fit him. His hat just stuck on the crown of my head. He certainly looked like anything but a soldier.

'The metamorphosis was very amusing; he enjoyed it much, and made himself perfectly at home in his unwonted garb. We gave him the name of Captain Jones, under which name we used to talk of him after his departure; but, with all our care, Bysshe's visit could not be kept a secret. I chanced to mention the name of Sir James Mackintosh, of whom he expressed the highest admiration. He told me Sir James was intimate with one to whom, as he said, he owed everything; from whose book, *Political Justice*, he had derived all that was valuable in knowledge and virtue. He discoursed with eloquence and enthusiasm; but his views seemed to me exquisitely metaphysical, and by no means clear, precise, or decided. He told me he had already read the Bible in Hebrew four times. He was then only twenty-two years of age. Shelley never learnt Hebrew; he probably said, in Greek, for he was much addicted to reading the Septuagint. He spoke of the Supreme Being as of infinite mercy and benevolence. He disclosed no fixed views of spiritual things; all seemed wild and fanciful. He said, that he once thought the surrounding atmosphere was peopled with the spirits of the departed. He reasoned and spoke as a perfect gentleman, and treated my arguments, boy as I was—I had lately completed my sixteenth year—with as much consideration and respect as if I had been his equal in ability and attainments. Shelley was one of the most sensitive of human beings; he had a horror of taking life, and looked upon it as a crime. He read poetry with great emphasis and solemnity: one evening, he read aloud to us a translation of one of Goethe's poems, and at this day I think I hear him. In music he seemed to delight, as a medium of associa-

tion : the tunes which had been favourites in boyhood charmed him. There was one, which he played several times on the piano with one hand, that seemed to absorb him ; it was an exceedingly simple air, which, I understand, his earliest love was wont to play for him. Poor fellow ! He soon left us, and I never saw him afterwards, but I can never forget him. It was his last visit to Field Place. He was an amiable, gentle being.'

TORQUAY, *Feb. 16, 1857.*

MY DEAR H.,

It is very difficult, after so long a time, to remember with accuracy events which occurred so long ago. The first time I ever saw Bysshe was when I was at Harrow. I was nine years old ; my brother George, ten. We took him up at Brentford, where he was at school, at Dr. Greenlaw's ; a servant of my father's taking care of us all. He accompanied us to Ferne, and spent the Easter holidays there. The only circumstance I can recollect in connexion with that visit was, that Bysshe, who was some few years older than we were, thought it would be good service to play carpenters, and under his auspices, we got the carpenters' axes, and cut down some of my father's young fir-trees in the park. My father often used to remind me of that circumstance.

I did not meet Bysshe again after that till I was fifteen, the year I left the navy, and then I went to Field Place, with my father, mother, Charlotte, and Harriet. Bysshe was there, having just left Eton, and his sister, Elizabeth. Bysshe was at that time more attached to my sister Harriet than I can express, and I recollect well the moonlight walks we four had at Strode, and also at St. Irving's ; that, I think, was the name of the place, then the Duke of Norfolk's, at Horsham. (St. Irving's Hills, a beautiful place, on the right hand side as you go from Horsham to Field Place, laid out by the famous Capability Brown, and full of magnificent forest-trees, waterfalls, and rustic seats. The house was Elizabethan. All has been destroyed.) That was in the year 1810. After our visit at Field Place, we went to my brother's house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, where Bysshe, his mother, and Elizabeth joined us, and a very happy month we spent. Bysshe was full of life and spirits, and very well pleased with his successful devotion to my sister. In the course of that summer, to the best of my recollection, after we had retired into Wiltshire, a continual

correspondence was going on, as, I believe, there had been before, between Bysshe and my sister Harriet. But she became uneasy at the tone of his letters on speculative subjects, at first consulting my mother, and subsequently my father also, on the subject. This led at last, though I cannot exactly tell how, to the dissolution of an engagement between Bysshe and my sister, which had previously been permitted, both by his father and mine.

In the autumn of 1810 Bysshe went to Oxford, to reside at University College, where he became acquainted with Mr. Hogg, and formed an intimate friendship with him. He found in him a kindred spirit as to his studies and speculations on various subjects, and it was not long ere Bysshe began to write on these. During the Christmas vacation of that year, and in January, 1811, I spent part of it with Bysshe at Field Place, and when we returned to London, his sister Mary sent a letter of introduction with a present to her schoolfellow, Miss Westbrook, which Bysshe and I were to take to her. I recollect we did so, calling at Mr. Westbrook's house. I scarcely know how it came about, but from that time Bysshe corresponded with Miss Westbrook. And not long after, for it was very soon after the Lent term had commenced, a little controversial work was published at Oxford. The pamphlet had not the author's name, but it was suspected in the University who was the author; and the young friends were dismissed from Oxford, for contumaciously refusing to deny themselves to be the authors of the work.

Bysshe and his friend then came to London, his father at that time refusing to receive Bysshe at Field Place. He came, therefore, to my brother's house in Lincoln's-inn Fields. I was then in town, attending Mr. Abernethy's anatomical lectures. The thought of anatomy, especially after a few conversations with my brother, became quite delightful to Bysshe, and he attended a course with me, and sometimes went also to St. Bartholomew's Hospital. At that time Bysshe and his friend took a lodging in Poland-street, where they continued for some time; I think, a great part of the spring, and I spent a part of every day with them. No particular incident occurred at the time; at least I do not recollect any. They both, but especially Bysshe, were occupied all the mornings in writing; and after the anatomical lecture, we used sometimes to walk in St. James's Park, where Bysshe used to express his dislike of soldiers; objecting to a stand-

ing army, as being calculated to fetter the minds of the people.

In the course of the spring, when his father was attending Parliament, an effort was made by the Duke of Norfolk to persuade my cousin to become a politician, under his auspices. By the Duke's invitation Bysshe met his father, at dinner at Norfolk House, to talk over a plan for bringing him in as member for Horsham, and to induce him to exercise his talents in the pursuit of politics. I recollect the indignation Bysshe expressed after that dinner, at what he considered an effort made to shackle his mind, and introduce him into life as a mere follower of the Duke. His father was puzzled what to do when that plan failed.

In the meantime, my brother Thomas, and his first wife, a very nice person, came to town for a few weeks, and became acquainted with Bysshe. He had heard much of Cwm Elan, in Radnorshire (at that time belonging to my brother, but since sold), from my sister, Harriet, and wishing much to see the place, he received an invitation from my brother Tom and his wife to go there that summer, which he did. Whilst on the visit, his continued correspondence with Miss W. led to his return to London, and subsequent elopement with her. He corresponded with me also, during this period, and wrote me a letter concerning what he termed his summons to link his fate with another, closing his communication thus: 'Hear it not, Percy, for it is a knell, which summons thee to heaven or to hell!' I sometimes think I have that letter locked up at S. If I go there in the summer, and find it, I will send it to you.

When Bysshe finally came to town to clope with Miss W., he came, as usual, to Lincoln's-inn Fields, and I was his companion on his visits to her, and finally accompanied them early one morning—I forget now the month, or the date, but it might have been September—in a hackney-coach to the Green Dragon, in Gracechurch-street, where we remained all day, till the hour when the mailcoaches start, when they departed in the northern mail for York. The following spring I saw Bysshe and Mrs. Shelley in London. They spent the summer of that year, 1812, with my brother and sister at Cwm Elan. Mrs. G. was very much pleased with Mrs. Shelley, and sorry when they left them. They intended at that time to settle in Wales, but I think they went to the Lakes instead, Bysshe having become acquainted with Southey. From that

time I never saw Bysshe again. My brother may have seen something of him, either in town, or in Edinburgh, but I do not quite recollect how that was.

I am afraid I have not been able to remember anything of Bysshe's early life that will prove of use. Though I spent many an afternoon and evening with Bysshe and Mr. H., at almost every coffee-house in London, for they changed their dining place daily for the sake of variety, I cannot recapitulate the conversations, though vividly recollecting the scenes. Believe me, my dear H.,

Your affectionate cousin,

C. H. G.

To H. S.

TORQUAY, *Feb*, 25, 1857.

MY DEAR H.,

I am indeed glad to hear of the favourable reception given to my few early recollections of Bysshe. I remember on the occasion of our going to the Duke of Norfolk's house, Hills, at Horsham, Bysshe's putting on a working man's dress, and coming to my sister as a beggar, and also his taking up one of those very little chests of drawers, peculiar to old houses, such as Hills was, and carrying it off part of the way back to Field Place; and Elizabeth's being in a state of consternation lest her father should meet with us. But Bysshe had the power of entering so thoroughly into the spirit of his own humour, that nothing could stop him when once his spirits were up, and he carried you along with him in his hilarious flight, and made you a sharer in his mirth, in a manner quite irresistible.

During my intercourse with Bysshe, this was his one happy fear. I never saw him after that, but with some care on his mind. I forgot to mention before, that during the early part of the summer which Bysshe spent in town, after leaving Oxford, the Prince Regent gave a splendid fête at Carlton House, in which the novelty was introduced of a stream of water, in imitation of a river, meandering down the middle of a very long table, in a temporary tent erected in Carlton Gardens. This was much commented upon in the papers, and laughed at by the Opposition. Bysshe also was of the number of those who disapproved of the fête and its accompaniments. He wrote a poem on the subject of about fifty lines, which he published immediately, wherein he apostrophized the Prince

as sitting on the bank of his tiny river ; and he amused himself with throwing copies into the carriages of persons going to Carlton House after the fête.

Believe me, etc.

C. H. G.

To H. S.

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